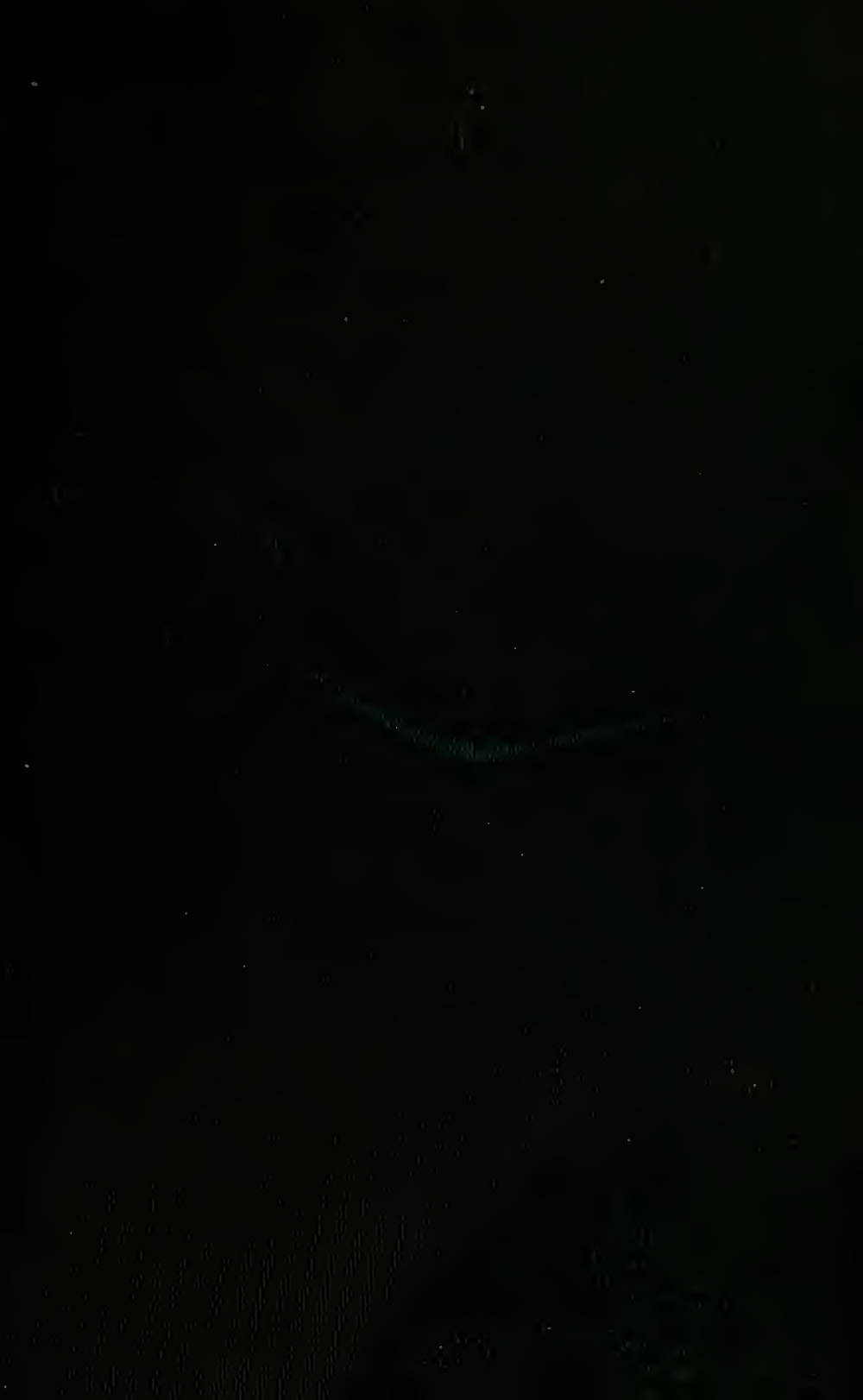

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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

CHERAMI

VOL. II

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

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CONTENTS

VOLUME II

CHAPTER I — PAGE

They Meet Again. A New Walking Stick. Good-bys. A Grand Party 1

CHAPTER II

Aunt Duponceau. The Bois de Boulogne . . 37

CHAPTER III

A Strong Woman and a Weak One 61

CHAPTER IV

Hunting the Feather-Makers. The Banker. The Young Widow. Orestes and Pylades . . 84

CHAPTER V

A Complete Reform. Coquetries. The Pleasures and Pains of Love 122

CHAPTER VI

Italy Again. Women are Often Variable . . . 150

CHAPTER VII

A Second Time. A Gentleman in Bed . . . 174

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VIII

PAGE

A Day with the Rabbits. Madame Capucine's Little Boys 195

CHAPTER IX

A Second Duel. Cherami Interviews M. Grandcourt 225

CHAPTER X

Cherami Desires to Retrieve His Errors. The Cousin's Specific. What Happened . . . 250

CHAPTER XI

The Return of Ulysses. Love Recompensed . . 273

CHAPTER XII

Tertia Solvet. The Pocketbook 295

CHAPTER I

They Meet Again. A New Walking Stick. Good-bys. A Grand Party

On leaving M. Gerbault's, Gustave did not immediately return to his uncle's offices; he experienced the need of walking, of taking the air, and although it was in winter he did not fear the cold; it seemed to him, on the contrary, that the rather keen breeze enlivened his blood and calmed his head, which the sight of Fanny had upset again. For it must be acknowledged that on seeing that lady she had appeared even more attractive to him than in days gone by, and Gustave had felt more than ever how much he loved the woman who had refused to be his wife. But already in the depths of his heart he had found a thousand reasons to excuse and extenuate her conduct; in his eyes she was rather volatile and fickle by temperament than intentionally guilty.

Now that he had seen Fanny again, now that she had spoken to him with a manner as gracious as that she had shown him before her marriage, and had invited him to visit at her house, Gustave did not know what to believe, what to think,

what to conjecture from all this. He asked himself why she wanted to see him, whether it was because she still felt some friendship for him, whether it was that she experienced pleasure from his presence, whether she compassionated his trouble in secret, or, whether it was only to exhibit to him her brilliant fortune, her rich toilets, and the homage which was offered to her, and Gustave walked haphazard for a long time on the boulevards which the cold had rendered almost deserted. He said to himself,—

"Oh, no, I shall not go to her house to witness her husband's happiness. As if I could have the courage to do that. Besides, the husband has not invited me, and it seems to me that he could not offer me a welcome. In his place I know that I could not. But Fanny did not think what she was saying, she invited me heedlessly, or merely out of politeness. Ah, she was always very polite and she is a hundred times more charming now. I was very wrong to go to M. Gerbault's."

Suddenly the sad lover was drawn from his reflections by some one who threw himself suddenly into his arms, who clasped him and embraced him, crying,—

"Ah, here he is! It is he! I see him again, this good, this dear Gustave. Victory! Castor has recovered his Pollux. I have caught my hare.

"And since we've met again, my friend,
Fortune her smiling face on me will bend."

Gustave tried to disengage himself, that he might see the face of this gentleman who lavished upon him so many marks of affection, and he recognized at last his improvised friend of the day of Fanny's wedding, the one with whom he had dined at Deffieux's.

Cherami was still the same, but in the cold weather they were then having, his clothing looked poorer than in summer, for his coat, shabbier than ever, stuck to his shoulders in such a fashion as to show that he had nothing underneath it. His plaid trousers, more frayed than of old, hardly protected his legs from the breeze which was blowing, and the Courbichon hat, by means of being pushed on the side of his head, began to resemble the one it had replaced. All this did not prevent "handsome Arthur's" holding himself as upright as before, and measuring everybody from top to toe.

"Why, it is monsieur—"

"Arthur Cherami, yes, my dear fellow, it is I, your Pylades, who have been looking for you by mountain and valley, and have even been to ask for you at your uncle's, the banker Grandcourt, who, I must say, did not receive me with all the politeness which I deserved. But uncles are generally rather unamiable. Yours told me you were in Spain."

"He told you the truth, I only returned yesterday evening."

"Since seeing him, I have gone to all the four corners of Paris, for I said,—'If Gustave has returned, I shall probably see him,' and here he is, the dear fellow whose absence seemed to me so long! But how's this, won't you shake hands with an intimate friend, with him into whose breast you poured your trouble?"

But Gustave hesitated to give his hand to Cherami, and answered him in a serious tone,—

"Monsieur, before shaking hands with you, I must have an explanation from you. You have had a duel with M. Auguste Monleard, a duel which you had rendered inevitable by addressing to the newly-married lady some offensive words. Why did you act thus? What reason had you for so doing? what was your object? Come, answer me."

"Well, by the powers! that is a question which I was far from expecting. I fight for a friend, I wound his fortunate rival—I did not kill him, it is true, though in fact I might have killed him. Your sweetheart would have been a widow immediately, and you might have married her."

"And I render thanks to heaven that M. Monleard got out of with it a wound on the arm. If you had killed him, I should have been accused of his murder."

"What, you? They know very well that it was not you that fought with him. I saw an unhappy young man grieving because the woman

he loved had married another. This young man interested me. I dined with him and he poured his sorrows into my bosom. Frequently he complained of the perfidy of her who had betrayed him, and the same evening, when I met the perfidious woman on the arm of her conqueror, you do not bear me a grudge because I sought to avenge my friend's misfortune? Confound it! how the devil do you understand friendship, then? If that is how you take the thing, good-by, let us speak of it no more. Seek other friends, but you will not find one in a dozen like me."

Gustave detained Cherami, who was going off, and extended his hand to him, saying,—

"Calm yourself, hot head. I feel that I cannot bear a grudge against you. Give me your hand."

"That's very lucky, he understands at last that I am devoted to him, and that I only want him to be happy."

"My dear monsieur."

"Don't call me monsieur again, or I shall be angry."

"Well, my dear Arthur, that duel had very much vexed me because I feared that it had quite turned Fanny against me; but thanks to heaven, it did nothing of the sort."

"As if women were ever angry with people for fighting duels about them. You do not know

them. On the contrary, it flatters their self-conceit and gives them a little importance."

"I have just seen Fanny. I met her with her sister. The meeting was unexpected. Ah, if you did but know—I am quite upset again."

"Do you still love that young woman?"

"Do I love her! alas, yes! I love her still, and I feel that this passion will be the bane of my life."

"The little lady accorded you, then, but a poor welcome."

"Quite the contrary, she gave me the most darling smile. She spoke to me as she used to speak before her marriage; finally, would you believe it, she invited me to a grand party that she is giving next Tuesday."

"What, and you still look sad? Why, it seems to me that you have nothing to do now but to rejoice."

"Why should I do that?"

"The fact that the lady, who knows that you formerly adored her, and who could easily see that you still loved her, the fact, I say, that she invited you to go and visit her, shows that she wishes to recompense you for your constancy—to crown your flame. By Jove, it isn't difficult to understand. Go there, my dear fellow, and I'll wager that before six weeks are over, the husband will be lodged at the sign of the 'Grand Cerf' or of the 'Grand-Croissant,' ad libitum."

"What, are you daring to think—to suppose

Fanny capable of betraying her husband, or forgetting her duty? No, no, she may be volatile, coquettish even, but she will never be guilty. As for myself, it is not thus that I understand love. A woman who shares her favors, who feigns for one a sentiment which she feels for another, I could no longer love such a woman as that."

"My dear Gustave," said Cherami, shaking his head, "you are young—quite young! You do not understand the world as I do, in fact, you still adore your Fanny, and you do not wish that she should deceive her husband for you."

"In the first place she would not do it."

"I am very much disposed to believe the contrary; but let us admit that you are right. To render you happy I see but one way, and that is to abduct the woman. Would you like me to abduct her? I will undertake to do so."

"No, my dear Arthur, such an idea has never entered my mind. Fanny's situation is extremely fortunate. I shall be very careful to avoid disturbing her happiness—I have neither the right nor the desire to do so; but as I feel that the sight of her doubles my sorrow and reanimates that passion which I am trying to extinguish; as I do not wish to expose myself, for some time at least, to the chance of meeting her, either at the theatre or in society, I shall start off again and begin my travels anew. My uncle always

has business in foreign countries, and he will not be sorry for me to take charge of it again."

"That's a deuce of an idea you have got into your head, for rather than stick to your love you will let this little woman send you to make a tour of the world."

"Let us hope that time will cure me."

"There is something that is a more certain cure for love than time, and that is another love. You must have ten sweethearts in Spain."

"Impossible, I can think only of her."

"You might boast of being a paladin, like those of the good old times. You would have been more than a match for Roland or Amadis. Ah, you are going again to leave Paris. Would you like me to travel with you?"

"Thank you, my society would not be at all agreeable to you; my only pleasure is to dream alone, to think of the happiness which I once hoped for but have never known."

"We could have sought some adventures together; we should have found them, I'll answer for it. That would have distracted you."

"I do not wish to be distracted, since my only pleasure is to think of her."

"Confound it, your love is devilishly tenacious, but since you are bent upon it"—and Cherami stopped and seemed to reflect in order to change the conversation.

"Then it will be a long time before I see you

again? That's very annoying, so much the more because there are times when a friend is quite necessary to one." Cherami stopped, shook his head, rubbed his chin, as he added mentally, "I have not caught my hare this time. It is a confounded nuisance."

Gustave looked at Arthur, whose pitiful face was still more impressive from the poverty of his costume, and he exclaimed,—

"Have you some service to ask of me, my dear fellow; speak, I beg of you, I shall be delighted to be of use to you."

"By Jove, my dear fellow, I will not hide from you that I find myself in a pretty bad corner just at this moment! I was counting on some money that I had coming in,—I shan't touch my income for six weeks."

"You need some money? Why didn't you say so, then? How much do you want?"

"Why at this moment, it's very cold and my rascal of a tailor hasn't kept his word with me. Then—well, I need quite a hundred francs to spruce me up a bit."

"A hundred francs! why, you can't do anything with that. Wait, my good fellow, here are five hundred francs. Take them, it won't put me out at all."

So saying, Gustave drew from his portfolio a bank note and presented it to Cherami, who could not refrain from starting joyfully as he received

the five hundred francs, and seizing the young man's hand he pressed it with all his might, exclaiming,—

"You are a friend after my own heart. My dear Gustave, I shall never forget what you have done for me at this moment. Hereafter, between us it is for life and death. I cannot tell you now the exact time at which I can return this sum to you."

"Well, who is saying anything about that? I have more money than I need, and I repeat to you I am happy to have the power to help you."

"Brave and worthy friend! you are made after the antique model. There is something of Socrates and of Marcus Aurelius about you. You don't want me to abduct Fanny, then?"

"No, I don't wish it."

"Well, if you change your opinion, you have but to write a word to me, always at the same address, 'Cherami, Rue de l'Orillon, hôtel Belleville'; for the rest, I will often go to your uncle's porter to inquire if you have returned. I am confoundedly sorry that you are going."

"I shall return and perhaps be more reasonable."

"Then we'll amuse ourselves and have some fine frolics. I won't say good-by, my dear Gustave. If you have any commission to give me, write to me; only, put stamps on your letters,

because my hostess has the habit of refusing all those which are unpaid."

"What, even when they are for her tenants?"

"Above all, when they are for her tenants."

Gustave departed, after shaking hands again with Cherami, and the latter looked after him with a softened expression, saying to himself,—

"What an excellent heart; he accommodated me so kindly. Decidedly, there are still friends. They are rare, but since they exist it only remains to find them. Now, let us think of getting some comfortable clothes. That will not be too luxurious; when anyone rubs against me I am always afraid that they will carry off a portion of my coat."

Cherami presently found one of those big, ready-made clothing shops, in which you can change your wardrobe from head to foot. He bought very wide trousers, a very thick waistcoat, a very large raglan and put under these garments the clothing he had already, saying, "I am like Biase, one of the seven sages of Greece, —I carry everything with me."

Cherami had made all these purchases for ninety francs. He left the shop much stouter than when he went in, and his double trousers obliged him to walk with a certain stateliness; but he was so pleased he thought himself so fine, that he smiled at everyone, even at the cabbies who passed by him. However, something was

still lacking to him, since he had restored M. Courbichon's cane to its owner and, because of his lack of funds, had not replaced it, which was for him a great deprivation. Now he could satisfy his desire; a man who has still four hundred and ten francs in his pocket, after buying new clothes, may well indulge his fancy for a cane.

Cherami perceived a shop in which there were canes of all kinds; he looked at twenty of them, among which there were some which were very high-priced. After hesitating between a fine Malacca cane, at seventy-five francs, and a walking-stick at a hundred sous, he finally decided on the later, saying, "After all, I have no need of a cane to support myself on. Thanks to heaven I have not the gout. I'll take the stick, it will serve as a riding-stock when I am on horseback, and then I like anything that is pliant. One can amuse one's self with it."

And armed with his stick which he caused to whistle in a fashion not at all agreeable to the ladies who passed beside him, Cherami directed his steps towards the Palais Royal, saying to himself, "Let's go and dine at the Frères-Provençaux, I love that old house, one is always well served there. It is rather dear, perhaps, but one can't pay too much for what is good."

"Monsieur, take care, you have caught me with your cane."

"What is the matter, monsieur? Of what are you complaining?"

"I said that you had caught me with your cane."

"In the first place, monsieur, this is not a cane, it is a walking-stick; in the second, you need not walk so near me."

"Monsieur, I am on the sidewalk where you are, and I have a right to be there, I think."

"What do you mean by such words, by such impertinences? If you don't like it, monsieur, tell me immediately. I am your man, I shan't run away."

The gentleman, who had not come out with the intention of having a duel, doubled his pace and disappeared without answering, and Cherami again began to gesticulate with his walking-stick, saying to himself,—

"It is very astonishing, on my word of honor, you see I dare not even play with this light stick, as if I should put myself out for them, as if—"

This time Cherami stopped, however, struck by the sound of breaking glass. It was a very fine pane which formed part of the front of a perfumery shop, which he had shivered into pieces with his stick. The shopkeeper was already at her door, from whence she said angrily to Cherami,—

"It was you, monsieur, it was you who broke this glass."

The dandified Arthur, without the slightest appearance of emotion, smiled at the perfumer and answered her,—

"Oh, well, beautiful lady, if I have broken your glass I will pay for it. You must not get angry for such a thing as that. How much does it cost, a glass like that?"

"Twenty francs, monsieur."

"Twenty francs, here they are; that is but a trifle," and Cherami departed, saying to himself, "I am not sorry to have used my stick for the first time."

On learning that his nephew desired to leave Paris again, M. Grandcourt evinced his regret at their further separation, but when he understood that Gustave still loved Madame Monleard, he put no further obstacle in the way of his travelling, and it was decided that this time the young man should go to Germany. Then the banker said to his nephew,—

"In your absence, an individual came here to ask for you—I say individual, for I don't know how to classify such a doubtful-looking personage. His name is, I believe, Arthur Cherami, and he calls himself your intimate friend, because you paid for his dinner on the day that Mademoiselle Fanny was married."

"I know whom you mean, uncle; I have seen him, I met him two days ago."

"I hope, my dear Gustave, that you are not

going to make an associate of that man. Perhaps you are not aware what he has done. He fought a duel with M. Monleard, after having addressed a very unconventional speech to his wife."

"I know it, uncle, but in the first place, on that day or rather on that night, the poor devil was a little tipsy, and hardly knew what he was doing. He thought he was avenging me, in fact; it only proves that he is brave."

"My dear fellow, the men who stop public coaches on the highway are generally brave also, which does not prevent them from being robbers."

"Oh, uncle, is that the way you think of poor Arthur?"

"I don't say that he is a robber, but I advise you not to associate with him."

"He is not at all a foolish man, he has received an education, and he knows the world."

"Then he is the more to be blamed for having fallen so low; for the truth is, he looked to me like a person who is always in search of a dinner. For the matter of that, since you are going away again for some time, I hope that will entirely break the relations between you and this gentleman."

Gustave had hastened the preparations for his new journey. However, being obliged to wait for some letters that his uncle wished him to take to his correspondents, it was not until the Tuesday

evening that he could take the train. Before going, he wished to see Adolphine again. She had evinced so much friendship for him that he felt he should be acting ill in leaving Paris without saying good-by to her. The fear of again meeting Fanny at her sister's held him back, when suddenly he remembered that it was on this same day that Madame Monleard gave the grand party to which she had invited him, and he said to himself,—

"Surely Fanny will have too much to do at home to-day, to have time to go and visit her sister. I may, therefore, go to Adolphine's, without fearing to meet there her whose presence now causes me more pain than pleasure."

Adolphine was at home, occupied in the preparations for her toilet, for although she did not expect the slightest pleasure at the grand party her sister was giving, she could not do otherwise than to go there. The young girl looked indifferently at the ravishing ball gown which her father had given her, and which would have delighted any young person of her age, but Adolphine said to herself,—

"What does it matter if they do think I look nice? The person whom I wish to please will not be at this ball. Ah, if he only could come! But he was right to refuse; he ought not to go, he could not go."

Madeleine softly half opened the door and said to her mistress,—

"Mamzelle, here is the young man who came the other day, the one who is so nice and who looks so sad."

"Monsieur Gustave?"

"Yes, it is that M. Gustave that your sister startled so the other day, that he left immediately."

"Good heavens! is my father in?"

"Yes, mamzelle, but he is in his room with M. Batonnin, who came in just a moment ago. They will be talking for a long time, and you know well that your father hardly ever comes into your room, and to-day he knows that you are busy about your dress for this evening."

"Ask M. Gustave to come in at once."

The trimmings, the flowers, the ribbons were all thrown on one side. Adolphine was so happy to think that she was about to see Gustave again. The latter was soon beside her. He hurried to press her hand affectionately as he said to her,—

"Forgive me for troubling you again, my dear Adolphine."

"Forgive you, why I am very pleased to see you, indeed; for the other day when you left, you said that you would never come here again, for which I was very sorry indeed."

"That was because I met your sister so unexpectedly. I was not prepared to do so, and I

could not hide from you that the meeting had awakened my emotion, had renewed my grief."

"Oh, I perceived it, but it was a great chance that you met her here, she comes very seldom."

"No matter. I would not have exposed myself to a second meeting with her, but I remembered that she gave her grand party to-day, and I said to myself that she would not have the leisure to come and see you this morning."

"Why, it seemed to me that Fanny was pleased to see you."

"All the same, my good little sister, her glances, her voice, her smile, all did me harm. Ah, you cannot imagine how any one suffers in being with one whom he loves, and who does not love him."

"Yes, yes, I understand."

"Above all, when one has once believed that he possessed the love of that person, and that he was going to pass his life with her. To see that woman again, when she belongs to another, is frightful torture. Fanny smiled on me, she invited me to go and see her. I should have a thousand times preferred a cold, severe welcome. I should have liked her to avoid my presence, as I wish to avoid hers; for then I should have said to myself, 'I am not totally indifferent to her, then.' But all this will not happen again, for I am going away, and I came to say good-by to you."

"You are going away again. Good heavens! you've only just got back."

"I should have done much better not to have come back at all. Paris weighs on me. It reminds me too much of the past."

"And where are you going now?"

"To Germany and Austria, as far away as possible."

"To stay for a long time?"

"Oh, yes. I do not wish to return until cured of my unfortunate love."

Adolphine put her handkerchief to her eyes and stammered,—

"It is not our fault, though, that my sister does not love you, and because of that we must lose—a friend."

"Dear Adolphine, friends as sad as I are hardly to be regretted."

"Do you think so? And what if I love them too?"

"When I come back I shall probably find you married in your turn."

"Oh, I shall not be married. I—you—I am sure of it."

"How do you know that? I am sure there are many aspirants for your hand."

"I refused two not long ago. They were rich, however; but I am not like my sister—I want to love my husband."

"Do you think, then, that Fanny doesn't love hers?"

"Heavens! I don't know anything about it. I don't know what I am saying, I feel so sorry."

At this moment some one opened the door of the room. It was M. Gerbault, who brought in M. Batonnin to his daughter, and the latter was the first to enter, saying,—

"Will you excuse me, mademoiselle, it was with the object of inviting you for the first contradance, that I—"

The honeyed gentleman suddenly stopped short, for he saw a young man beside Adolphine; he rolled his eyes towards papa as he resumed, "Mademoiselle has some one with her, we are disturbing her."

M. Gerbault was also much surprised at finding a gentleman with his daughter, and at seeing that the latter had her eyes full of tears; however, he soon recognized Gustave who bowed low to him saying,—

"Pardon me, monsieur, for taking the liberty of coming to see your daughter, but I came to say good-by to her, and I counted also on having the honor of greeting you before I left."

"Oh, it is you, Monsieur Gustave, I thought you were in Spain."

"I returned from there a week ago, monsieur, and this evening I am leaving for Germany."

"Why, what is the matter with you now, Adolphine? One would think that you were

crying. I don't think, however, that you have the slightest cause for grief."

M. Batonnin thought he ought to intervene, and murmured, "Saying good-by to a friend always produces that effect. Life is so short; when people part, they are never sure of meeting again."

"Oh, monsieur, what do you mean by that?" cried Adolphine, glancing tenderly at Gustave.

M. Batonnin hurried to answer, "Mademoiselle, I had not the slightest intention of distressing you. You may be quite sure of that, since I came to ask if I might dance the first contradance with you, for you can't have forgotten, I think, that this is the evening on which your sister gives a ball."

"No, monsieur."

"And I," said Gustave, "understand that I came at an unfortunate time to disturb mademoiselle in her preparations for the fête, to take up her time with a poor traveller, who wished before leaving to carry away with him some friendly words. You must excuse my importunity, mademoiselle. I am unfortunate in disturbing the happiness of others with my melancholy, but I am sure you will forgive me on account of our old friendship. M. Gerbault, will you allow me to shake hands with you?"

The manner, at once sad and dignified, with which Gustave had said these words, dispelled

the gravity of M. Gerbault's expression. He held out his hand to the young man and shook hands with him cordially, saying,—

"Come, my dear fellow, put these sad thoughts from you. At your age the future is vast. Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by useless regrets; you may still be happy, and you will be so one day, I am sure of it. I wish you a good journey. Study the manners and customs of the countries in which you are going to travel, and I am persuaded that you will come back in an infinitely more cheerful frame of mind."

"Thank you for your good wishes, monsieur. Good-by."

Gustave pressed Adolphine's hand, bowed to the gentleman whom he did not know, and departed. While the young girl was accompanying him to the door, M. Batonnin said to M. Gerbault,—

"This young man, I see, is an admirer of Mademoiselle Adolphine, and you have refused him her hand. He was no doubt an unsuitable parti, still it was very kind of you to give him hope for the future."

"My dear Monsieur Batonnin, you are altogether wrong. It was not Adolphine, it was her sister Fanny with whom Gustave was in love, and he flattered himself that he was going to marry her, when Auguste Monleard presented himself. After that, he hadn't the smallest

chance. Auguste offered my daughter a position that any young woman might have envied, and she accepted him as her husband. This young man was deeply mortified."

"I understand, then, it was he who fought a duel with your son-in-law, who gave him that wound which obliged him to carry his arm in a sling for such a long time."

"You are again in error. It was not Gustave who fought with M. Monleard, for Gustave was already far from Paris when this duel took place."

"With whom, then, did your son-in-law fight?"

"By Jove, you are asking me more than I know."

Adolphine's presence put an end to M. Batonnin's questions, who assumed a softer voice to speak to her,—

"Mademoiselle, I ask your pardon for always repeating the same phrase like a parrot, but I wanted to know if I could obtain from you the favor of the first contradance. I ask in advance, because I am quite certain that this evening you will be beset, overwhelmed with invitations, and it will perhaps be very difficult to get near you."

Adolphine seemed to be making an effort to recover herself as she answered,—"I do not yet know, monsieur, whether I shall dance this evening at my sister's, for I have a very bad

headache, and if it does not stop, I shall make rather a sad figure in the dance."

"Don't listen to her," said M. Gerbault, "these young girls have headaches which take them at the most unexpected moments; but be easy, there is no headache so bad that it will not yield to the signal of the orchestra at a ball, and as your invitation is given, you are sure of being her first partner. And now let us leave mademoiselle to her preparations. Come, my dear M. Batonnin."

The soft-mannered gentleman gave Adolphine a magnificent smile, accompanied by a respectful bow.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "I rest on what your father has just said, only too happy if you will crown my desires; and if my invitation, rather premature perhaps, and somewhat untimely—"

"Come along, M. Batonnin, come along."

Led by M. Gerbault, the man of compliments was obliged to finish his phrase in the antechamber. Adolphine, left alone, felt much annoyance against M. Batonnin, who with his invitation had come to disturb the conversation she was having with Gustave; she tumbled and tossed her adornments spitefully, as she muttered,—

"A ball, I must dance this evening when my heart is full, when I should like to be able to weep in freedom. Ah, if these are the pleasures

that the world offers, those who cannot take part in them are the happiest by a long way."

Resplendent with lights and flowers and new draperies put up with an art which did honor to the taste of the giver of the festival, M. Monleard's handsome drawing-rooms at ten o'clock were ready for the guests; at eleven those invited began to arrive in crowds; the women wore magnificent gowns, and sparkling diamonds that dazzled the eye; some of them, but these were in the minority, were more simply attired, content to charm by their beauty solely. The men admired the beautiful dresses, but by preference stayed with those who had least need of them in order to please. A choice orchestra played quadrilles, polkas and mazurkas. The tones of the music seemed to animate all the faces, for they all evinced the pleasure of their possessors; both those who were dancing and those who were going to do so—the latter is always most agreeable.

At midnight there were so many people at this gathering, that it became very difficult to pass from one room to another. A degree of labor and perseverance was necessary, which several ladies declined to undertake, and besides the enormous dimensions of their crinolines would have rendered it almost impossible.

The ball was at its height; the queen of the festival did the honors with so much grace that everyone agreed in thinking her charming.

Fanny wore a gown which was extremely becoming to her; although not overloaded with ornaments, her white moiré gown was studded with bunches of natural flowers, and in her hair she wore merely an aigrette of diamonds. The satisfaction her vanity caused her to experience in giving such a fête made her eyes shine more brightly, made her smile sweeter, and her voice clearer. She was surrounded by a numerous court; it was who could obtain from her the favor of a polka or a quadrille, and then every one envied the happy mortal who was her partner; the more so, as Fanny danced to perfection. She was light as a feather, and her feet hardly seemed to brush the floor.

Auguste Monleard was far from exhibiting the same enjoyment, the same satisfaction as his wife; he did the honors of his drawing-room with the exquisite politeness, the elegance of a man of the great world accustomed to giving entertainments. But there was in his smile something constrained, forced, which was calculated rather to chill than to provoke gayety. Then at times a cloud of gloom obscured his forehead; he frowned, his lips were compressed, and he did not appear to pay any attention to what was said to him. However, these moments of distraction did not last long. Auguste on awakening from them forced himself to be more cheerful.

Adolphine arrived early with her father; she did not dazzle by the brilliancy of her toilet, but she charmed by her natural grace, her perfect figure, the softness of her beautiful eyes, and perhaps also by a certain expression of melancholy which she sought to overcome, but which lent further attraction to her whole person.

Monsieur Batonnin had not failed to be in evidence when the orchestra had given the signal for the dance, and he had insisted that the young girl should accept him as her partner. For the matter of that, it mattered little to her with whom she danced. What she would have preferred, would have been not to dance at all, but as she was the sister of the mistress of the house, that was impossible. Too many people would have asked her the reason, and that would have made her father uneasy and her sister angry. She was obliged, on the contrary, to look as though she were enjoying herself greatly, and that was most difficult. One can do a great many things to oblige, but the eyes are not sufficiently obliging to hide the true sentiments that one experiences.

Monsieur Batonnin while dancing with Adolphine overwhelmed her with compliments, which he intermingled with his observations on the entertainment.

"It is magnificent! It is delightful! ravishing! How elegantly these drawing-rooms are decorated; with what taste! flowers everywhere, with-

out counting those who are dancing, for women are flowers and resemble them greatly. Others have said that before me, it is true; but there are some things that cannot be repeated too often. A festival such as this must have cost a pretty penny; but then when one has means—M. Monleard doesn't look so cheerful as his wife, he is not dancing. As for that, the master of the house has no time for dancing. I don't suppose he can be ill, although he is very pale; but, then, he is nearly always pale."

To all these remarks Adolphine had merely answered by monosyllables, and the gentleman with the doll's face said to himself after the quadrille,—

"This young person looks almost as cheerful as her brother-in-law; Papa Gerbault said that the young man I saw this morning was in love with her sister, but it isn't that which makes her look so melancholy; there's something else, certainly there's something else."

In a room reserved for the card players, M. Clairval, M. Gerbault, and young Anatole de Raincy met together.

"What! you are not dancing?" they said to the latter.

"Oh, by Jove! no. I've never been madly in love with dancing," answered the young dandy as he looked at himself in the glass. "And then there's such a crowd. There's no room to spread

one's self out, and I like to spread myself out when I am dancing."

"Are you dancing the cancan, de Raincy?" said a young man with a jolly face, striking Anatole on the shoulder.

"You're a stupid fellow, Vauflers, because one tries to dance a little gracefully he doesn't have to dance the cancan."

"Oh, I don't loll through a dance as you do."

"In the first place I glide through a dance, I don't loll, which is quite different. You must know that to dance well, one has to glide through a dance. I had that from a great dancer."

"From Vestris?"

"Oh, don't bother me; since you've become the eighteenth stockbroker, you make game of everybody."

"And what is the news at the Bourse this evening?" said Auguste Monleard, approaching the young man they called Vauflers.

"You know that they executed several individuals this morning. I don't think they are quite through with it yet. The place must clear itself. A great many men have been going in too steep for some time past."

Auguste pressed his lips tightly together and walked away. The young man resumed,—

"Can't we have a game of bouillotte here?"

"My dear fellow, bouillotte is bad form now,

no one plays it any longer," answered big Anatole admiring his gloves.

"Well, perhaps bezique is good form."

"No, lansquenet is still preferred."

"Yes, because they can ruin themselves faster! Thank you! I'll go and dance, then. I have invited the mistress of the house, she put my name on her programme, but mine is the twenty-first dance."

"Your turn will come to-morrow evening, then."

"Oh, Madame Monleard will make an exchange in my favor."

"And why is that?"

"Because I am her stockbroker."

"Why, does Madame Monleard deal at the Bourse?"

"Why, yes, moderately, but she is more fortunate there than her husband."

"Has the latter been losing then?"

"I should think so, enormous sums for some time past. I confess I was very greatly surprised at his giving such an entertainment, although sometimes it is a way of deceiving people as to one's position and of preserving one's credit."

"Devil take it! What are you telling me now?"

"At this moment I have an idea that in a certain operation he is risking what they call all for nothing, but if he should lose—"

"Be careful, his father-in-law is coming over here, let us get away."

The two young men locked arms and passed into another room.

"Good heavens! how beautifully your wife dances," cried M. Batonnin to Monleard, as Fanny passed by them dancing a mazurka with a partner who also danced beautifully, and was showing her some new steps.

"What! were you saying it was too warm here?"

"No, I never complain of heat. I'm a veritable African for heat. I was admiring Madame Monleard's dancing. She has just passed in front of us, dancing the mazurka. It must be confessed she has a partner who dances well too. He has such a firm grasp of her waist, and she glides so languidly. He's a very handsome fellow, that young man. What's his name? Why, how's this, he's gone off without answering me. Hum! One may say what one likes, Monleard is not like himself, he is too preoccupied, too distrait, but what's the good of that, that doesn't prevent his wife from dancing?"

At two o'clock in the morning, the ladies were invited to seat themselves at a magnificently served table; and as there were too many people in the rooms for everybody to have supper at the same time, the ladies were to begin, and the men were to have supper afterwards; except some impatient cavaliers, of whom there are almost

always some at balls, who find a way of having a little place made for them at the table with the ladies, where, under the pretext of serving them, they do not fail to serve themselves with everything that is best, and freshest and most delicate. Then, after having laid hands on everything, after having eaten without interruption, while the greater part of the ladies did nothing but talk, it is not rare to see these same gallant cavaliers come back and place themselves at the table to sup with the men, and there begin to eat as if they had never seen anything in the way of food before. There are numerous fine fellows of this tribe; we have seen magnificent examples of it.

Monsieur Batonnin had tried to slip in at the ladies' table, but, despite his eternal smile, no one had made room for him. He therefore decided to remain standing, and he naturally placed himself behind Adolphine, whom he overpowered by his attentions, for Adolphine had no appetite, and refused nearly everything this gentleman had served for her, and which he had obtained immediately by saying,—

"This is for Madame Monleard's sister, Mademoiselle Gerbault, who is the queen of the evening."

With these cabalistic words M. Batonnin had been sure of having everything that he could desire; but if his courtesy was lost, the dishes

she had refused were not, for when after having presented them to Adolphine, the latter said to him, "Thank you, monsieur, but I cannot eat that," the honeyed gentleman never failed to look at what was on the plate and say,—

"Then since you don't want it, by Jove, I'll eat it myself."

And thanks to this skilful manoeuvre, M. Batonnin had supped quite as well and perhaps better than if he had had a place beside the ladies. But in truth he had eaten standing up. When the ladies had left the table and the men replaced them, whether it was by chance or because he was absent-minded, M. Batonnin, imitating those jolly fellows of whom we were speaking just now, seated himself at the table beside M. Clairval, who said to him,—

"What! are you supping again?"

"What do you mean by again? I've not had my supper yet."

"It seemed to me, however, a little while ago, when I came to admire the charming view afforded by all these ladies at the table, that you were behind Mademoiselle Adolphine, and that you were holding a plate in your hand and eating what was on it."

"That is to say, I was behind Mademoiselle Adolphine to serve her, and that I was passing her everything she wanted."

"Still, I saw you eating."

"Tasting, perhaps, but you can't call that eating, and then I was standing and what one takes standing is never counted."

"After all, my dear M. Batonnin, I am not reproaching you. Quite the contrary, you deserve a compliment, indeed. Honor to grand capacities of all kinds. A good stomach is a gift of Providence. The richest man whose digestive apparatus is out of order is more hardly treated than the poor man who can digest his bacon rind and similar delicacies."

Auguste Monleard sat down to supper with the men, to do the honors of the table. He began by imbibing several glasses of champagne; then, like a person who wishes to stifle his feelings, at all costs, he set himself to eat, and to drink cup after cup of different wines. This manoeuvre was successful. After a quarter of an hour his brow cleared, and his eyes became animated. He talked with every one and provoked his guests to out-drink him. He was almost gay; in fact he did laugh, but it was with a nervous rather forced laugh; however, he produced the best effect at the close of the supper. When these gentlemen left the table where they had made rather a long stay, they demanded a cotillon, that dance which has become the almost invariable epilogue to a ball, and it was Auguste Monleard who proposed to lead it.

This proposition was accepted with joy by the

company of dancers. Adolphine was quite surprised at the levity now shown by her brother-in-law, and remarked to her sister,—

"Your husband looks very cheerful now. It makes me quite pleased to see him."

"Why, did you think he was not cheerful before?" answered Fanny. "My dearest you were in error. Auguste always enjoys himself, only he doesn't look like it, that is his style."

The cotillon was danced; the dancers, worn out, at length decided to think of retiring, and Batonnin, who had had two very good suppers, left with Anatole de Raincy, humming,—

"Oh, lovely night! oh, festive scene!"

"I know that, it's from the Opéra Comique," said the big young man.

"By Jove, it suits the occasion, 'Oh, festive scene!'"

"Yes, but I'm afraid—after what Vauflers told me—"

"What did he tell you?"

"That Auguste Monleard had lost enormous sums at the Bourse lately, and that he must be in a very distressing position."

"The devil he has! that was what made him seem so absent-minded then. At supper he drank a good deal to divert himself, I noticed."

"After all he may pick himself up again; luck sometimes turns. Ah, I see a coupé. Monsieur,

I will wish you good night, or rather good day, for it is day—the day is breaking."

"The same to you, monsieur."

Batonnin regained his apartment alone and on foot, saying to himself,—

"After all, whether M. Monleard be ruined or not, I've certainly had two suppers."

It is nearly always thus that our friends and acquaintances take part in the misfortunes that happen to us.

CHAPTER II

Aunt Duponceau. The Bois de Boulogne

Our friend Cherami, following his usual custom, got rid of the money Gustave had given him in a remarkably short space of time; however, there still remained some crowns to him from his five hundred francs; what was more, his dress was very respectable, for he had treated himself to a new hat, and he still had his new stick.

It happened that on a very cold but fine morning about ten o'clock, when he was loitering along by the Madeleine, to give himself an appetite, the former handsome Arthur saw in front of him an enormously corpulent lady, holding with each hand a little boy, one of whom had on a kind of hat surrounded with feathers, which gave him the appearance of an educated monkey; the children as well as their mamma, were enveloped, buried, calked in their winter clothing, which seemed to smother them, so that they had not the free use of their limbs. These three bales of dry goods knocking one against the other as they walked, came to a sudden stop when they found themselves facing our loiterer, and the fat lady exclaimed vivaciously,—

"I was not mistaken—it's really M. Cherami, out walking already."

Cherami had recognized Madame Capucine and her sons, and, little pleased at the meeting, he would willingly have retraced his steps to avoid them, but there was no way of doing so; so bravely making the best of it, he bowed gracefully, as he answered,—

"Yes, it is I, myself, fair lady, and I congratulate myself upon the happiness that chance has procured for me—for you are quite distant from your neighborhood. Are you going to Romainville by any chance?"

"No, monsieur, no, we are not going to Romainville; besides, this is hardly the way to get there," answered Madame Capucine, examining the person she addressed from head to foot, and the change which had taken place in the dress of her debtor naturally produced one in the manner in which she spoke to him. This change was quite to Cherami's advantage. She smiled graciously and resumed,—

"My Aunt Duponceau no longer lives at Romainville, she has sold the house she owned there."

"Really, and why was that?"

"Oh, because—that part of the country has acquired a certain sort of name. You know the song, 'This delightful wood, for lovers!'"

"'Offers a thousand charms!' Yes, I know

it by heart, but there is no longer any wood except a small piece which has been bought by a novelist of whom I am very fond, and which is surrounded by walls—not the novelist, but his woods; in fact, I don't see that there is much there that could alarm your Aunt Duponceau."

"Good heavens! you know how malicious people are. Some of them kept saying to her, 'Oh, you live at Romainville. That's the country for grisettes, tea gardens, singing societies; one meets a good many drunkards there.' "

"It seems to me there are drunkards everywhere."

"They are not the elegant feature of a promenade."

"The elegant features are not always the most amusing."

"One doesn't see any new fashions there."

"Certainly, if one goes to the country to see the fashions, it would be much better to go only to the Opera."

"In fact, the strongest reason and that which decided my aunt was, there was no railway running to Romainville."

"That certainly must have had great weight with a person, who, once established in her country house, never comes to Paris at all."

"Yes, indeed, so my aunt bought a house in the neighborhood of Passy."

"Certainly Passy and Romainville are far

enough apart and do not resemble each other either."

"Oh, they are quite different. Aristoloche, will you be quiet! Passy is an elegant neighborhood, and very comfortable. You can't go out of your house without being dressed up."

"That's very agreeable when one lives in the country."

"The houses are all waxed from the top to the bottom. The one that my aunt has bought—Narcisse, don't jump like that!—the one that my aunt has bought there is much smaller than the one she had at Romainville, but cost a good deal more. There is no fruit in the garden, and it is much smaller."

"What does she grow in the garden there, ducks?"

"There are some honeysuckles, some ivy, and some grass. Oh, it is very well kept."

"So long as it pleases you, that's the principal thing. Are you going to the country in such cold weather?"

"My aunt always expects us from Saturday to Monday."

"Why, yes, in fact, it is Saturday to-day. The same as when I met you at the omnibus office at the Porte Saint-Martin."

"But since that time—Aristoloche, if you move again, I'll box your ears!—since that time it seems to me, M. Cherami, your affairs have improved, to judge by your appearance."

"Yes, my dear Madame Capucine, I have received some money that was due to me. By Jove, that makes me remember. Twenty times have I had the intention of going to your place to settle the little account I had with your husband, but other occupations have always prevented me from attending to that matter. A very trifling one, it is true, but I am always intending to do it."

"Oh, well, if you have the desire to see Capucine, there is a very simple way of doing so, unless, indeed, you have made arrangements for the day."

"For the day I can do as I please, I am as free as air."

"Then come with us to Passy, to my aunt's. She must be waiting for us for breakfast. We are a little late, and presently—Narcisse, will you desist from pulling the feathers of your handsome Henri IV hat like that, you will ruin them."

"They make me squint. It almost blinds me, this old hat does."

"You scapegrace. A hat that your aunt gave you—"

"You were saying, my dear Madame Capucine,—"

"I was inviting you to come with us to visit my Aunt Duponceau, with whom you are acquainted; this evening at six o'clock, Capucine

will come and join us, and you will settle your little account with him. What do you think of my proposition?"

Cherami reflected a moment, then he answered,—

"Your proposition suits me to a T. I mean to say, it suits me perfectly. The society of a charming woman, an impromptu trip to the country, better still, this breakfast; I am yours to command. Let us start."

"Now, that is very nice of you." And the fat lady smiled very broadly at Cherami, whom she thought a very fine man since he was well dressed.

The latter had already formed his plan, of which the idea of paying his debt formed no part; but he was sure of making a good breakfast, and probably of being also kept to dinner with Aunt Duponceau. Later on he would easily find a pretext for getting rid of the Capucine family.

"Here is the Passy omnibus," said the fat lady, "don't let us miss it."

They got into the omnibus; Madame Capucine put M. Aristoloche on her knee, in order that she might not have to pay for him. She begged Cherami to do the same with Narcisse, which did not appear tempting to "handsome Arthur." Fortunately, for him, the little boy cried to have a place of his own, threatening that if they would not give him one he would sit on his Henri IV hat. This threat produced its effect. M. Narcisse

placed himself in a corner and Cherami affirmed that the little boy well deserved to have a seat of his own. They started and presently arrived at Passy; where Cherami offered his arm to Madame Capucine and they walked towards the aunt's dwelling; the two little boys gambolling on before them.

At Passy they were no longer afraid of the carriages for the children, and M. Narcisse seized the gentleman's walking-stick, with which he struck all the posts and all the stone benches, which afforded little amusement to Cherami, who expected at each moment to see his pretty walking-stick in the same condition as M. Courbichon's cane.

"That's a promising boy," he said.

"Is he not full of ideas?"

"I am persuaded that he will have the happy idea of breaking my stick; but how came it that you did not bring your maid Adelaide?"

"Ah, don't speak to me of that girl, I beg of you."

"What! has the faithful Adelaide been stealing from you?"

"No, it is not her honesty that is in fault. It is something entirely different. Who would ever have thought it? Who would ever have believed it? Such an ugly girl. A girl with no figure at all. Oh, men sometimes have shockingly bad tastes."

"Why, you don't mean to say that Capucine has been—"

"Oh, no, monsieur, it's not my husband."

Madame Capucine raised her eyes to heaven with an expression which meant, If it were only that! Then she resumed, bristling with indignation,—

"Ballot, monsieur, our young clerk,—"

"Devil take it! the young man with whom you were so satisfied?"

"Of course, one might have known how it would be. He behaved himself very well at first."

"And he strayed into the kitchen?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"But are you quite sure? People are so malicious."

"They were surprised, monsieur, surprised among the bunches of onions."

"Enough! don't tell me anything more about it. Don't make me cry."

"You may imagine I immediately cleared the house. I sent Mademoiselle Adelaide away."

"And your clerk also?"

"He went of his own accord. One might perhaps, have forgiven him, he was so young."

"Of course, and the smell of onion goes to the heart."

"But M. Ballot wanted to do something inconsiderate. He is gone."

"Have you replaced him?"

"I am looking for some one at this moment. Ah, M. Cherami, a young man who possessed—all my confidence; one can never count on anything."

The fat lady heaved an immense sigh and leaned heavily on her cavalier's arm.

"Does she want me to replace M. Ballot?" said the latter to himself. "Thank you, I've caught my hare."

They had arrived at Aunt Duponceau's. She was a little woman who shook her head so constantly in speaking, that she seemed to be answering in the negative to everything that was asked of her. She received Cherami very kindly, although she hardly knew him; but she loved society, and was desirous of all things that her house should be admired. Cherami preferred, first of all, to admire the breakfast; and as the little Capucines supported this motion they passed immediately to the dining-room.

The breakfast consisted merely of a meat pie, soft boiled eggs, a knuckle of ham, and coffee; but the pie was good, the eggs fresh, the knuckle of ham tender, and the coffee very strong. They breakfasted well; then Aunt Duponceau exclaimed,—

"You must go over my house from top to bottom."

Cherami, who had eaten to repletion, was already saying to himself,—

"Confound it! if it is necessary that I should stay here from now until this evening, with the aunt and the niece, and these two little wretches who wipe their hands on my trousers, that will be paying dear for the dinner. I must try to find a subterfuge for going."

And he answered Aunt Duponceau,—

"It will be better for us to begin our inspection of your house from the bottom up—the garden first of all; besides, after a good breakfast one feels the need of air."

This request was granted; they went into the garden, which was small and offered nothing to refresh the sight but four gillyflowers in pots; for in the month of December one hardly finds leaves on the trees; the garden had, therefore, few attractions, but there was at the bottom a door which opened into the Bois de Boulogne. The ladies and children, who were frozen, had soon had enough of the garden. Then Cherami drew a cigar from his pocket, saying,—

"I am going to ask your permission to go and smoke this cigar outside in the wood. After breakfast, I can't get along without smoking my cigar. It is a habit I have acquired. A very bad habit, I confess, but I cannot get rid of it."

"Smoke in the garden," said Madame Duponceau.

"No, indeed! your garden is very small, and the smell of the tobacco will kill the odor of your

gillyflowers. I don't want to make a guard-room of your delightful cottage."

"He's extremely well bred," whispered Madame Duponceau to her niece.

"Yes," answered Madame Capucine; "since he is well dressed, M. Cherami is more recognizable."

Our smoker managed, not without trouble, to rescue his stick from the hands of young Narcisse, who was trying, with all his might, to fight his brother; he lit his cigar, went out by the gate at the bottom of the garden, and breathed freely as he said,—

"By all the powers! here I am outside; there are breakfasts which cost a great deal. Madame Capucine was casting glances at me which were beginning to frighten me; her aunt always looks as if she were preparing to refuse something one is about to ask of her; the little boys are two shameless monkeys, who ought to be kept in a big cage in the Jardin des Plantes. Ouf! Let's have a little air. I little expected this morning, so cold as it is too, to be walking in the Bois de Boulogne; but since I am here, I will profit by it. I won't go back to those fogies until it is time for dinner. I will say my cigar made me unwell."

Cherami buried himself in the wood, where, as the season and the hours were both early, he scarcely met anyone. He was beginning his second cigar, when, in turning a path, he saw a

well-dressed gentleman coming towards him, who was striding along and turning to look back from time to time as if he feared being followed. On seeing Cherami coming towards him, this individual stopped; he seemed undecided as to what he wished to do and quite ready to go back the way he came. But, meanwhile, our smoker still advanced; presently these two men were quite near to each other. Then an exclamation of surprise escaped them both.

"By Jove! I'm not mistaken, this is M. Auguste Monleard, whom I have the pleasure of greeting."

"And this the gentleman with whom I fought a duel—at Belleville."

"The same, and at your service, if there is any way in which I can oblige you—Arthur Cherami."

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten your name!"

"You are in the Bois de Boulogne early. I say early, it is more than half past twelve; but in winter hardly any one takes a turn in the Bois except from three to five."

"Yes, yes, you are right; but what about yourself?"

"Oh, I breakfasted at Passy with some good people whose society was not diverting; and by Jove! after breakfast I came to smoke my cigar here. How comes it that you are not on horseback?"

"Why, because it suited me to come on foot, probably."

"That's quite right, excuse my reflection. For myself, if I still had a horse, I certainly should not go on foot. But I am very fond of horses. I have had some very fine ones; it used to be my passion."

While Cherami was speaking, Auguste looked again from side to side, with an uneasy air. He was even paler than usual, and there was a grave and gloomy expression on his face.

"Have you, by any chance, a meeting for this morning?" resumed Cherami, shaking the ashes from his cigar. "If that is the case, and you are lacking a second, you know, my dear monsieur, that I am quite at your service, and that I shall be delighted to prove useful to you in any way."

"No, no, I have no duel this morning," answered Auguste; then looking fixedly at the person who was in front of him, he resumed, after a few moments; "however, monsieur, you can in fact, render me a great service."

"I can? Speak, then, I am quite at your orders. I have nothing to do."

"Yes, it is by a happy chance I met you here. I left Paris rather suddenly this morning, and I forgot to write to someone. It is, however, very important that I should do so."

"You want me to carry a letter to someone?"

"It concerns a very grave matter, M. Cherami. I address myself to you because, if I have judged

you rightly, I believe you to be a man capable of understanding me."

"What the devil! your tone is mighty serious. I see that there's no question of a joke with you."

"Are you disposed to render me a service?"

"More than ever."

"Well, then, will you come with me? There must be some café, some restaurant in which I can write."

"Yes, wait, we have only to turn that way and go back a few steps, when we shall find what we want."

"Go on, then; have you breakfasted?"

"Why, yes, as I was telling you just now, I had some breakfast at Passy. That would not, however, prevent me from taking something more. The air is keen, and then walking makes one hungry again directly."

They set off walking. Auguste went so fast that Cherami, despite his long legs, could hardly follow him. He tried to renew the conversation, but his companion no longer answered him, and seemed absorbed in his thought.

"This man has something the matter with him," said Arthur to himself, as he lit another cigar. "I don't know what it is, but his long face does not indicate one who is considering with what sauce he shall eat his lobster. After all, that's his business. He has confidence in me and I shall not betray it, because he's a fine fellow; I am only

sorry that I stuffed myself with pie and eggs at Aunt Duponceau's, for I certainly should have breakfasted much better with him; but, then, one isn't a sorcerer."

They came to a café-restaurant, and asked to be shown into a private room. Then Auguste said to Cherami,—

"Order whatever you like; anything you please. I have already breakfasted."

"You also? It was hardly worth the trouble of coming here then."

"Excuse me, I came to write. It is necessary that I should write two letters; later on I—I shall leave you, so eat at your ease, since nothing hurries you."

"Very well; waiter, what is there that I can have very light that will restore my appetite? Oh, I know; bring me a nice slice of paté-de-foies-gras with a bottle of very old beaune. We will amuse ourselves with that, and later on we shall see."

They served Cherami; meanwhile, Auguste placed himself at another table and wrote.

Madame Duponceau's breakfast did not prevent Cherami from relishing the foies-gras, which he moistened frequently with beaune, saying from time to time, to his neighbor,—

"Won't you drink a glass of this wine? It's very good; quite old. There won't be any of it left presently; and in truth, we'll get rid of it,

that we may order another. Waiter, bring me some kind of cheese, and a second bottle of beaune."

Auguste had ceased to write; he closed the two letters and presented them to Cherami.

"My dear monsieur, will you take these letters. One is for my wife, Madame Monleard; the address is on it."

"By the way, how is your wife?"

"Very well, but allow me to finish; this other letter without any inscription is for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, and I want you to swear to me that you won't open it until half an hour after I have left you."

"Half an hour after you have gone?"

"Yes, swear to me."

"Oh, if it will oblige you, I'll swear it."

"Thank you; I count on your keeping your word."

"And you may; I know how to do so in serious affairs; but this other letter."

"When you have read the one I have written you, you will see what I want you to do. And I am persuaded you will carefully fulfil my intentions."

"I told you that I was quite at your service."

"Here is my pocket-book, for I cannot come back here. You will find in it enough to pay the expenses you have incurred at this restaurant."

"Very well, I will pay it, and return the rest in the pocket-book. It's a very pretty trifle, very elegant, and in very good taste."

"If it pleases you, keep it in memory of—our acquaintance."

"You are really too kind, but I don't stand on ceremony, I accept."

"And now, pour me out something to drink, I should like to touch glasses with you."

"That's very well said."

Cherami filled two wine glasses. Auguste took one in a steady hand, clinked it against Arthur's, pronounced some unintelligible words, and swallowed the wine at a single draught.

"Confound it! how fast you go. One hasn't time to follow you. I imbibe champagne like that sometimes, but usually it's a wretched way of drinking wine. I would rather taste it. A second glass, that I may drink your health?"

"It is needless, I haven't time. Good-by, monsieur, I count on your promise. You will not look at this letter before the lapse of half an hour."

"You have my word for it. And are you going so soon?"

"I must."

"When shall I see you again, then?"

"I can't tell you; good-by, monsieur."

"Au revoir, rather."

Auguste had taken his hat; he pressed Cherami's hand, again pointed to the two letters lying on the

table, and hastily left. Cherami leaned back in his chair and balanced himself. He drank another glass of wine, and asked for cigars, saying to himself,—

"Since I must stay here for half an hour longer, I must have something to occupy my time. Waiter, serve me some coffee, some brandy, some kirsch. Oh, and see what time it is now by your sundials. Tell me the exact time."

The waiter returned, bringing what had been ordered, and said,—

"The hall clock is just striking two, monsieur."

"Very well, when the half hour sounds, you must come and tell me, do you understand?"

"Very well, monsieur, I won't fail to do so. Does monsieur wish for anything else?"

"No, these flasks of brandy and kirsch will suffice me to pass the time. In any event, I can ring.

"This has been a very singular day," said Cherami to himself, as he began to smoke. "I never suspected, this morning, when I was walking along the boulevards to give myself an appetite, that I should breakfast at Passy, and then breakfast a second time in the Bois de Boulogne. This M. Monleard is hiding some plan,—and rather a doubtful one, I fear. These two letters he left with me, and one of which is addressed to myself—there is something mysterious about it all. This pocket-book which he gave me is

rather nice; let's see what it contains. A bank note for a hundred francs. Hang it! I have caught my hare. Here will be enough to pay for breakfast, at any rate. And what are these other papers—stockbrokers' notices; bought—sold by order of M. Monleard; they are of no importance, and there is nothing else there. Our young capitalist must have made bad speculations and decamped. That is quite possible. Well, I shall know all about it presently—ten minutes must have gone by at least. Let's take a pull at the kirsch. That little rascal Narcisse has scaled my walking stick. Nice children those are! how well behaved! This letter attracts my eye. Never has time appeared to me so long."

"Did monsieur call?"

"Yes; give me my bill, that I may pay it; add to it the three bottles of kirsch I have drunk—and when you come back tell me what time it is."

"Yes, monsieur."

The waiter came back and presented the bill, saying,—

"Monsieur, it is a quarter past two."

"Only a quarter past! you must be mistaken, confound it! It's impossible that it is but a quarter past."

"I assure you, monsieur, it is no more by the hall clock. If you like, you can come and see for yourself."

"That's all right. Let's see the total, seven-

teen francs, fifty centimes. Here! change this bill for me; and when you bring me back the change, look at the clock a little more carefully."

"Why, monsieur, I can't look at it in any other way than—"

"Come, waiter, don't discuss it. I don't like discussions."

"This is indeed life," said Cherami, again applying himself to the kirsch. "When one is with a pleasing woman, when one is playing an interesting game of cards—time does not halt, it flies 'hora vita simul?' In other moments it waddles like a turtle—there comes a time, however, when one finds it has gone much too fast. This does but prove that men are never satisfied with their position. Ah, how pretty is that old fairy tale, entitled: 'Nourjahad and Chérédin,' which struck me so much when I read it—in my youth. M. Nourjahad was a young, rich, and handsome Mussulman, who lacked nothing to make him happy, and as a consequence he was not at all contented; he complained that time did not go fast enough for him, because he was to marry his cousin at twenty-five years of age, and reign over a great kingdom when he had attained his thirtieth year. Chérédin was an old dervish and a bit of a sorcerer; he heard Nourjahad cursing fate and said to him,—

"'I can confer upon you the power of making time pass as quickly as you please; but it is

dangerous. You will shorten your life, if you don't learn to moderate your desires.'

"The young man was delighted, he accepted and promised to use the power granted him with moderation. But, by Jove, when did one ever see a man resist the desire of possessing immediately that which he ought not to have till later on. Nourjahad wanted to be twenty-five, to marry his cousin; and then thirty, to be sultan. Presently he wanted to be a father, and then to see his child all grown up; then he was at war with his neighbors, and he wanted a decisive battle immediately. In fact, this devil of a Nourjahad lived so rapidly in satisfying his wishes, that he found he had aged thirty years in one month: then he cursed the power that had been given him, and Chérédin said to him, 'My good fellow, this is how all men would do if they were allowed to make time pass.' And touching Nourjahad with his wand, he restored his youth and advised him to keep it as long as possible. This fable is very instructive; but if, instead of advancing time, one could cause it to recede; well, people would look twice at it still. People pass so many bad quarters of an hour that it is possible no one would care to live it over again."

The waiter came back out of breath, exclaiming,—

"Excuse me, monsieur, if I have been long,

but we hadn't the change here, and I had to go elsewhere for it. Count it, monsieur."

"And what time is it? Deuce take it, tell me the time."

"I didn't think to look, monsieur."

"Well, go and see stupid!"

"See first that your change is correct."

"I'm not bothering about my change; the time, rascal! the time?"

And Cherami pushed the waiter towards the door by the shoulders; then he waited his return impatiently, again remarking, "I can understand Nourjahad."

The waiter returned.

"Monsieur, it is three minutes past the half hour."

"That's very fortunate! Be off with you."

"But have you counted your change, monsieur? I want to be sure—"

"Yes, yes, booby, my change is right; wait, here are two francs for you, and now, toddle!"

"Must I come back and tell you the time again, monsieur?"

Cherami partly arose; but the waiter understood and escaped. The two letters were on the table. After throwing away the remains of his cigar, Cherami took the one that was for him, saying,—

"That's singular—I feel confoundedly queer

about this! Come, no stupidity, let's open it and see what there is in it."

He opened the letter and read,—

My dear monsieur: When you read this I shall be dead,—

"Dead!" cried Cherami, striking the table violently with his fist. "Come now! that is not possible. I have read it wrong, but if—"

—I shall be dead. I had a snug little fortune, but it did not suffice me; I gambled at the Bourse and I was not fortunate; I married, hoping that a woman's love would work a change in my ideas, and that sweet domesticity would satisfy my ambition. Unfortunately, I deceived myself. The person I married had one of those dry hearts to which one can not unbosom one's self; a week in our household was enough to show that she had not the slightest love for me, but that she wanted to shine in the world and eclipse all the other women. Then I played more heavily that I might, at least, satisfy my vanity. Ten days ago I held a grand festival to try to disguise my situation. I was still hoping I should find some way out of it; and I risked all I had. I lost; I am ruined; and as I have not your philosophy, as I could not resolve to lead a poverty-stricken existence, after enjoying all the delights of luxury, I am going to blow my brains out. Be so good as to go to my wife, and break the news to her gently. I do not believe that her heart will be greatly afflicted by it. I ask your pardon for the trouble I am giving you, but I have judged you to be a man who will keep the promise you have made. Good-by, for the last time. AUGUSTE MONLEARD.

Cherami remained stunned for some moments after reading this letter. He even passed his hand over his eyes to wipe away a tear, then he muttered,—

"What! that fine fellow who was here just now.

But let's see, confound it! perhaps there is yet time!"

And rising precipitately, he took his hat and cane, put the letters in his pocket, and left the room. Downstairs he asked which way the gentleman who had been with him had gone; they showed him. He walked quickly and soon reached the most deserted side of the wood. But presently he saw a crowd gathered; then he saw the gendarmes penetrate the undergrowth; he then addressed a peasant who came towards him,—

"What has happened? Why did these gendarmes come here?"

"My God, monsieur! some one has killed himself in the wood—a very well-dressed young man really. How can men who are well enough off to dress like that, do such things? It was that little urchin down there who discovered it first."

"Then it is all over, he is dead?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, and his overcoat is quite new!"

"In that case," said Cherami, to himself, "I have but to acquit myself of the commission with which he charged me."

CHAPTER III

A Strong Woman and a Weak One

As Cherami proceeded on his way to Paris after the melancholy event which had taken place in the Bois de Boulogne, he thus cogitated,—

"This event has entirely changed the state of affairs. This young Fanny is a widow, she is free—her husband is dead. I hope Gustave won't accuse me of killing him this time. Besides, I have the letter poor Auguste wrote me, and I preserved it carefully; for people are quite capable of believing that it is I who killed him in a duel, but in fact, this young woman whom Gustave still loves, and who is the cause of his not remaining in Paris for fear of meeting her—this Fanny for whom he has a passion such as is hardly ever seen—I might even say is never seen—is now a widow, and since she welcomed Gustave so cordially the last time she met him—for I remember he even told me she had invited him to go and see her—but then, or 'ergo' as we used to say in class, since this young woman did not look unfavorably on Gustave when she was married, it seems to me she must be even more favorably disposed to him now she is a widow. She pre-

ferred Monleard to him because that poor fellow offered her all that entices a woman. Now that lady is ruined, and it occurs to me that she will be more than fortunate if she recovers my young friend, who seems to me to be in a very satisfactory position. Really, I think the matter may be arranged—not all at once, because in fact we must leave the young widow time to weep for her husband; but I see in the future this dear Gustave's love and constancy recognized. How pleased I shall be thereat; for then Gustave will cease his travels, will remain in Paris; and it is always well to have friends like him right under one's thumb. What a pity that he is not here now. I should have hastened to tell him this great news; but I shall learn where he is, I shall find him; meanwhile, I must think of acquitting myself as gently as possible of my commission to this young woman. It's not exactly a pleasant task, but if everyone in this world did only those things that were agreeable, it would become very monotonous."

Fanny was in her boudoir, engaged in trying on some morning caps, and from time to time she left her mirror to consult the last account of the Bourse, which was on her dressing-table, when her maid came to tell her that a gentleman was asking to speak to her.

"A gentleman? What gentleman? Do you know him, did he tell you his name?"

"No, madame; I have not seen the gentleman here before."

"Are you quite sure that he wished to speak to me? Was it not to M. Monleard?"

"No, it was you, madame, and he assured me that it was something very important."

"Is the man presentable? Does he look like a gentleman?"

"Why, yes, madame."

"Then ask him into the drawing-room, and I will go down."

And Fanny hurriedly finished her toilet, saying to herself,—

"It is probably M. Vauflers, who is sending me one of his friends to let me know what he has done at the Bourse. It's a quarter past four, yes, it must be that."

Cherami was shown into the drawing room, where he examined the furnishings, and muttered,—

"It's not half bad; very good style. I have been lodged like this myself. This is rather better than the Widow Louchard's. But people have their ups and downs, all the same."

Fanny appeared, she bowed to this gentleman, thinking he had rather a strange expression, for it is thus that we qualify that which we cannot define. She showed him an easy chair, saying,—

"You desire to speak to me, monsieur. It is about affairs of the Bourse probably."

At the sight of the young woman, Cherami felt embarrassed. He understood that his commission was more difficult to fill than he had thought at first. However, he seated himself, stammering,—

"Madame, I came to speak to you on the subject of—"

"Of the Bourse to-day, did you not?"

"No, not about to-day, madame. It really is, however, the Bourse, which has caused—which has brought about the event—the catastrophe."

"Monsieur, have the kindness to explain yourself more clearly, for I cannot understand you at all."

Cherami bit his lips, trying to think how he could prepare the young woman for that which he had to tell her, and after reflecting for some time, he exclaimed,—

"Madame, I came to inform you that your husband is dead."

Fanny made a sudden movement, looked at the person before her, and shrugged her shoulders as she answered,—

"Monsieur, if this is a joke permit me to tell you that it is in the worst possible taste."

"And one I certainly should not allow myself to make. I did not come here with the intention of joking. What I have to say to you, madame, is very serious."

"Why, monsieur, I saw my husband at lunch-

eon. He was not ill nor even indisposed. What accident can have happened to him?"

"No accident happened to him. It was he himself, who wished to end his existence, and he blew out his brains in the Bois de Boulogne, to-day, at half past two."

Fanny changed color, but she preserved her strength, and resumed,—

"No, that is not possible, monsieur. You must be mistaken; it cannot be my husband. And what reason could Auguste have for killing himself? Young, rich, happy as he was."

"Well, it appears, madame, that he was much less happy than you would like to think. As for his being rich, he was no longer so, for he had ruined himself completely at the Bourse. He was no longer possessed of anything, and he had not the courage to support these blows of fate."

"Ruined!" cried the young woman, starting in her easy chair, "what do you mean by that, monsieur, ruined? Why, then I must be ruined also. I no longer possess anything then. Why that is frightful, that is shocking!"

"Poor Auguste was right," said Cherami to himself, as he saw the despair with which Fanny was overwhelmed. "It was not her husband's death that afflicted her the most."

"But, monsieur, how do you know, how did you learn this event? And if my husband is dead, how do you know that he is ruined?"

"Pray, listen to me, madame. To-day, after breakfasting at Passy with some very respectable persons who must even now be waiting dinner for me—but I shall not go—I went to smoke a cigar in the Bois de Boulogne where, as it was quite cold, very few people were passing. There I met your husband. We are acquainted, he had met me on one occasion, and—in short, he knew how to appreciate me. He came to me and asked me if I would render him an important service. You may well imagine, madame, that I placed myself at his disposal. Together we went into a café where he wrote two letters. One of these was directed to myself, and he made me swear not to open it until half an hour after he had left me, and he then went out. I waited until the half hour was past and then I opened the letter. It informed me of his dreadful resolution, and the motives which had led him to make it. Then he charged me to carry the other letter to its address."

"And this other letter, for whom was that?"

"For you, madame, here it is."

Fanny took in a trembling hand the letter which Cherami presented to her, and she read in a tremulous voice,—

Madame, when I married you I thought that it would make us both happy, but I was mistaken. A loving woman was necessary to calm and soften the liveliness of my disposition. I found in you a woman who only loved money and pleasure.

Here Fanny stopped; she continued to read the letter, but to herself.

I do not reproach you, madame. One cannot change one's disposition; above all, at your age. Sensibility is a gift of nature, as egotism is a vice of the heart. I misjudged you, that was my fault, not yours.

Not finding myself happy in that sweet intimacy I had dreamed of, I tried to replace it by all the pleasures which foster vanity. I have not been successful, I have lost all that I possess. You also are interested in the Bourse, but I advise you, madame, do not gamble there.

Fanny interrupted herself again, to utter a deep sigh. Then she resumed her reading,—

But, reassure yourself, madame, I do not leave you in debt. I have met all my engagements honorably. I have paid everything, and my name will at least be without a stain. You may bear it without blushing.

The young woman shrugged her shoulders slightly, which did not indicate that she thought it fortunate that her husband had paid his debts; she even muttered between her teeth,—

"It's all very fine to leave me his name and nothing with it. Ah, there's something more at the foot of the letter."

I have not touched your dowry. You will find it intact at the lawyer's. With that and what you will get from the sale of our furniture, which is very handsome, and from the carriage and the horses, you will have enough for a modest existence. Good-by, Fanny, be happy; as for me I could no longer exist in this world, and that is why I have left it. Good-by."

This last paragraph seemed to calm Fanny's despair a little; however, she covered her eyes

with her handkerchief, and kept them thus for some time.

Cherami, who watched her attentively as she read her husband's letter, then said to himself,—

"You have great need of keeping your handkerchief at your eyes. I would willingly wager that you are not weeping, although your husband was quite young and perished in such a manner after barely six months of marriage. There are some women who would have fainted, who would have had an attack of syncope, but this is a strong woman."

Cherami then rose, and took his hat, saying,—

"Madame, I have fulfilled the sad commission with which your husband charged me. As I believe that my presence is no longer necessary to you, I will take my leave."

Fanny quickly uncovered her face, as she exclaimed,—

"Pardon, monsieur, but since you were willing to fulfil the last wishes of—M. Monleard, may I hope that you will render the same services to his widow."

"Madame, I will do anything that you ask me, only too happy if I can be of use to you."

"Thank you, a thousand times, monsieur, you know now in what condition I am. You will think, perhaps, that I have taken rather coldly the catastrophe which has fallen upon me."

"Madame, I do not allow myself to bear judgment upon your feelings."

"But, monsieur, put yourself in my place, do you think that I can take what my husband has done as a proof of his love to me?"

Cherami scratched his nose, saying,—

"Mercy! a proof of love!—but, perhaps, he feared he could no longer render you happy, that thought may have made him lose his head."

"Monsieur, one, at M. Monleard's age, ought to have courage, strength. People lose their fortunes every day, but when one has intelligence, perseverance, one can make another."

"That is not so easy, perhaps, as you would like to believe, madame. I also had a pretty fortune; I spent it, which I think is a good deal better than having gambled it away. It leaves more balmy memories, but I have never been able to become as rich as I was before."

"Monsieur Monleard puts me in the wrong; he has said now that I love pleasure only, but why, when he was seeking my hand, monsieur, did he show me, in order to entice me, a future existence of fêtes, luxuries, equipages, gowns, all those things in fact which always make a young girl's heart beat. He married me from caprice, and this caprice once satisfied, he repented of being married. Oh, I saw it more than once, and that is why, monsieur, I bear with so much courage, the news you have brought me."

"Madame, you need not have told me all that, but I do not see—"

"Excuse me, this is what I ask of you. In the situation where I find myself, you can understand that it will be necessary for me to see my father and my sister, but I don't want to go to their house, nor do I wish to inform them myself of this fatal event."

"I understand, madame, you desire that I should charge myself with the duty of informing them of what has happened."

"Yes, monsieur, if that does not abuse your kindness."

"I will go to your father's, madame. By Jove, while I am in the way of doing commissions it will cost me no more."

"Ah, monsieur, how kind you are. How grateful I am."

"I have always been at the ladies' service; but give me M. Gerbault's address, if you please."

"Oh, you know my father's name?"

"Yes, madame, there are a great many things that I know, but I cannot tell you of them at this moment."

"Here is my father's address."

"Very well, I will go at once, madame, and if I can be of service to you, pray make use of me. Arthur Cherami, Rue de l'Orillon, hôtel Bel-Air, at Belleville—only, pay the postage on your letters. Madame, I present my compliments to you."

And Cherami left Madame Monleard's, saying to himself,—

"I am following the trade of a messenger of death just now, but after all I could not refuse that young woman. She is pretty, she's no fool, she knows what she's about. Ah, I can understand how she bewitched Gustave. As for myself, after all, I should greatly prefer a weak woman to a strong one."

Monsieur Gerbault was at home with his daughter when Cherami presented himself before them. Fanny's father, who had never seen this gentleman, gave him a seat and waited for him to explain the object of his visit. But directly he came in, Adolphine had recognized Cherami as the gentleman who had dined with Gustave on the day of her sister's marriage; and Cherami, for his part, bowed graciously to the young girl as to a person whom he had already met.

"You know my daughter, monsieur?" said M. Gerbault, looking surprised.

"Yes, monsieur, I had the pleasure of seeing mademoiselle the day that your other daughter was married. I also was dining at Deffieux's with some one who is not unknown to you."

"Monsieur is a friend of Gustave," Adolphine hastened to say.

Monsieur Gerbault frowned slightly, for he remembered having been told that it was with a friend of Gustave that his son-in-law had had a

duel on the day after his wedding; however, he confined himself to answering, in a rather dry tone,—

"I am waiting until monsieur will kindly explain to me the motive of his visit."

The rather unamiable expression with which M. Gerbault pronounced these words, began to put Cherami out of temper. He threw himself back on his chair, exclaiming,—

"By Jove! my dear monsieur, if you think it was to amuse myself that I came to your house, you are grossly mistaken. My commission in itself is so unpleasant—"

"Monsieur, I beg of you to—"

"You assume a tone that does not suit me at all; and if you were not the father of this pretty young lady, I should have already demanded satisfaction of you."

Adolphine joined her hands, exclaiming,—

"My father did not mean to offend you."

"Mademoiselle, your father made a very unpleasant grimace when you told him that I was Gustave's friend. Why was that? Am I to be despised because I am his friend? Friends like me who are always ready to expose their lives to prove their devotion, I beg you to believe, are not to be found at every turn of the spade; but after all, I lost my temper and I was wrong. I will tell you squarely what brought me here. It is not worth while to take any precaution. I

came to announce to you the death of a young man of your acquaintance."

Adolphine uttered an exclamation, and stammering,—

"Oh, my God! Gustave is dead," she fell unconscious and a frightful pallor overspread her face.

"My daughter, my daughter, what is the matter with you? Come to yourself," exclaimed M. Gerbault, trying to succor Adolphine; but the latter did not open her eyes. They called Madeleine, who brought salts and vinegar. They placed the young girl near an open window, and while they were doing this, Cherami exclaimed,—

"Why, no, it isn't Gustave who is dead, the poor little thing. The idea! I was far from expecting this, and it was because she thought Gustave was dead that she fainted so completely. Ah, the color is coming back a little now. This will be nothing. Wait! she is opening her eyes. I will help her to come to entirely."

And leaning towards the young girl, who was looking around her with a gloomy expression,—

"Mademoiselle," said he, "reassure yourself, it is not Gustave who is dead, it is not Castor who is in question."

"Is that indeed true, monsieur?" cried Adolphine, quickly.

"I swear it on your head, and I would not compromise such a pretty head as yours."

"Well then, monsieur, why don't you explain yourself," said M. Gerbault. "Of whose death did you come to inform us?"

"Of that of your son-in-law, Auguste Monleard, who died to-day towards two o'clock, in the Bois de Boulogne."

Then M. Gerbault put himself into a fury and advanced towards Cherami, saying to him,—

"Ah, you have killed him this time, unworthy man. And you yourself come to announce his death? And you are not ashamed of your victory? It was not enough to have one duel, but you must take his life."

"Ta! ta! ta! all right, it's papa's turn now. But why do I bother myself with fathers and uncles of this type? No, monsieur, I did not kill your son-in-law, who has indeed killed himself; and in fact, it would have been better for him had he come to his death in the duel we had together—for it would have been a more honorable end. As for that, I can show you proofs of what I assert, for you would be capable of disbelieving me. I expected that you would—but I must now show you the evidence."

Cherami gave M. Gerbault the letter Auguste had written him, and then related all that we already know—what had passed in the Bois de Boulogne, and his visit to Fanny. During this recital, Adolphine shed tears abundantly, and she murmured,—

"Poor Auguste, oh, how grieved my sister must be."

The news of his son-in-law's suicide affected M. Gerbault keenly, although officious hints had already informed him that Monleard gambled at the Bourse in such a manner as to risk his fortune there. He decided then to make his excuses to Cherami for the suspicions he had conceived, but the latter extended his hand to him, and said,—

"Let us think of it no more; shake hands. You are quick, and so am I; besides, when one hears of such an unexpected misfortune, it is quite allowable that one's ideas should be a little confused. Now that I have accomplished all the commissions with which I was charged, you have no further need of me, and I'll take myself off. Good-by, Papa Gerbault; mademoiselle, your humble servant."

And as Adolphine showed him to the door, he profited by it to say to her in a low tone,—

"Do you know where Gustave is?"

"No, monsieur,—in Germany, I think."

"Be easy, I will find out. I have caught my hare."

A fortnight after her husband's death, Fanny was installed in a modest little apartment at the top of the Faubourg Poissonnière. With the twenty thousand francs of her dowry, the money she had received from the sale of her furniture, her horses, her carriage, and with the sum she

had amassed in speculating in railways and other industrial stocks, the young woman could rely on two thousand francs income. This was very little beside the brilliant fortune she had possessed for such a short time, but it sufficed as the means of living for a woman who knew how to calculate perfectly.

M. Gerbault proposed to the young widow to come and live with him and her sister as before her marriage, but Fanny had refused; she preferred to remain free; and then she had, no doubt, hopes for the future, and as she looked into the mirror, for she kept sufficient of her handsome furniture to furnish her new retreat very elegantly—the pretty woman said to herself that many would aspire to cut short her widowhood; and she thought that in living alone she would have greater freedom and could choose better.

As to the defunct, for a week his death had been the news of the Bourse and the drawing-rooms; a fortnight later he was spoken of very seldom and by the end of the month he was forgotten.

There was one person, however, who often thought of him to deplore his sad end, to regret that Fortune had shown herself so cruel to a young man who, on his part, had treated that dame too lightly when she had shown herself favorable to him. This person was not his widow, it was Adolphine. The poor little thing had at

first felt quite ashamed of having allowed the interest she felt for Gustave to become apparent, but she was unable to master the sensation which had struck her when she had thought it was his death Cherami had come to announce. Later on, on learning the truth, she had long wept for Auguste's death; then she had hastened to her sister to console her and mingle her tears with those of the bereaved wife; but she had found Fanny far more occupied with her affairs of interest than with the loss of her husband. Thus, in the beginning of her widowhood, the young woman received a visit daily from her sister, and it was always Adolphine who spoke of Auguste and shed abundant tears to his memory. At length Fanny one day said to her,—

"My darling, if you come to distract me you really take a very strange way of doing so. M. Monleard died of his own free will; he left me because he wished to, without in the least troubling himself as to what would become of me; to speak frankly, it was hardly worth while for him to marry me, to act thus at the end of six months. He made me refuse a young man, who indeed would have made me much happier. For he really loved me; and according to what you tell me his position has become very advantageous. He earns ten thousand francs a year, I believe?"

Adolphine wiped her eyes, forced back her tears and stammered,—

"Why, I think so, yes."

"What! you think so? You are not sure of it now?"

"Why, yes, it was himself who told me so."

"Oh, well, with ten thousand francs one may lead a sufficiently happy life. One can't have a carriage, as I had with M. Monleard, it is true, but it is much better not to have a carriage than to be obliged to come down from it. In fact, I don't see why I should ruin my eyes by weeping for one who is no more. In the first place, I despise men who commit suicide, each one for his own opinion, but that is mine. One should know how to bear the blows of fate. Do you know where Gustave is now?"

"Why, no, he wanted to travel again."

"That's strange. Ordinarily he always tells you where he is going, and now that I ask you, you know nothing about it."

"He mentioned Germany, that is all."

"He's gone on his uncle's business?"

"I believe so."

"Well, he can't travel forever; he will come back. We shall see him again, this poor Gustave. He was quite changed to his advantage on his return from Spain. He had acquired a self-assurance, elegance even, had he not?"

"I hadn't noticed it."

"Oh, you make me impatient. It seems to

me, however, that it is far more interesting to speak of the living than of the dead."

"Everybody is not so quickly consoled as you."

"Do you want to preach morals to me now?"

"No, sister, I only want to say that people are happy in having a disposition like yours."

"My dear Adolphine, I have already been a widow for two months. I know a little of the world. When you have my experience, you will see that one must know how to console one's self for everything."

"I don't think I shall ever have your philosophy."

Each time the two sisters found themselves together, Fanny did not fail to lead the conversation to Gustave. This subject, although keenly interesting to Adolphine, was painful to her when Fanny discussed it; but accustomed for a long time past to hide the secrets of her heart, and to shut up in it a feeling which she dared not confess to anyone, Fanny's young sister tried to listen with indifference to the plans which Auguste's widow was already forming for the future. One day in talking with Adolphine, the young woman suddenly exclaimed,—

"By the way, do you know who that man is whom M. Monleard sent to tell me of his death? I never saw him come to Auguste's house; however, he must have been intimate with him to entrust him with such a commission."

"That was M. Cherami."

"Yes, that was the name he told me when he left me his address, and offered me his services. The gentleman is quite original looking. But who is this M. Cherami? When I begged him to go to you, he knew our father's name."

"It was through Gustave, of course, that he knew."

"Does this gentleman know Gustave also? He knows everybody, it seems. Was it also through Gustave that he knew my husband?"

"Why, rather, since—"

"Since what? Why don't you finish, Adolphine? I don't know what's the matter with you now, but I have to drag the words from you."

"It is because I thought you knew at the time. Your husband had a duel the day after your marriage."

"I am well aware of that. With an individual, who, as I was leaving the ball on the night of my wedding, shouted, 'Here is the perfidious Fanny.' Good heavens! I remember that as if it were yesterday. But what is the connection?"

"The individual who said that on seeing you leave the ballroom was M. Cherami.

"He? Why, you don't mean to say so? Was it he with whom my husband fought?"

"Yes, really."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's altogether too funny."

"What! you are laughing?"

"And why should I not laugh? Men really don't know what they want and deserve that we should laugh at their fits of desperate anger in most cases. What, M. Monleard fought a duel with M. Cherami, and a little later on chose him as the confidant of his last wishes! You see very well that men don't know what they are doing, and that they, who believe themselves infinitely more reasonable than we, are infinitely less so."

"There may have been other motives that we don't know of."

"Oh, you suppose men always possess reason, do you?"

"Why accuse those who can no longer defend themselves?"

"What you say is all very fine—but I might say, why give to the dead virtues which they did not possess when living. That is what I hear done in the world a hundred times over. It is some artist or literary man of whom they said enough to hang him. He was malicious, envious; he disparaged his confrères, he had neither talent, nor style, nor imagination; but should he die, all these men sing his praises; the defunct was a delightful man, good, obliging to his confrères, full of talent, endowed with extraordinary imagination. How many times have I heard all that,

and shrugged my shoulders with disdain and pity as I said, 'Try, messieurs, at least, to remember to-day what you said yesterday.' But as to myself, I should like to know why M. Cherami called me the perfidious Fanny! Do you, Adolphine, who know so many things without seeming to know anything, know why it was?"

Adolphine colored as she answered,—

"This gentleman had dined with Gustave at the restaurant on the day of your wedding. Gustave, no doubt, told him his sorrows—and—his love, and then later on M. Grandcourt, Gustave's uncle, came in search of his nephew, and took him away but this M. Cherami remained at the restaurant, and it seems he got rather tipsy, and—"

"And in his devotion to his friend, he reproached me as being perfidious. Ha! ha! that was a pretty thing, indeed. He fought a duel to avenge his friend, an act worthy the knights of old. When I see M. Cherami, I shall certainly compliment him upon his antiquated chivalry."

"You bear no grudge against him, then, for calling you perfidious?" inquired Adolphine, wonderingly.

"Not the least in the world! If women got angry every time they were called perfidious, they would get angry far too often," replied Fanny.

While these conversations were frequently renewed between the two sisters, who were both of them preoccupied with the same subject, in regard to which the one openly avowed her hopes, while the other was obliged to stifle her sighs, some one was giving himself an immense amount of trouble to try to bring near them the object of their interest. You will divine that we speak of Cherami.

CHAPTER IV

Hunting the Feather-Makers. The Banker The Young Widow. Orestes and Pylades

Shortly after the unhappy Auguste Monleard's death, Cherami, reflecting upon that event, not unnaturally reverted to its probable sequences.

"We must," said he to himself, "in the first place, allow some weeks to elapse after this unfortunate event; it will not be seemly or decent that my impassioned Gustave should return immediately to throw himself at the feet of the charming widow—'non est hic locus.' It is not always a question of doing things; for them to be successful we must give them time and opportunity. As for myself I shall get along very well for some time longer. I still have something remaining from the five hundred francs lent by my intimate friend; I have the change from the hundred-franc note that poor Monleard left to pay for the breakfast, which only came to seventeen francs, fifty centimes. With that sum, a nice walking-stick, and decent clothes, one can surely manage to enjoy himself a little in this rascally world.

"Now, it would be agreeable to me to meet those grisettes again, whom I saw one day at the Porte Saint-Martin at an omnibus office. By Jove! it was the very day on which I made Gustave's acquaintance. They were both very pleasing; one of them was a blonde, one a brunette, one fat and one thin,—with a skin like parchment; and, according to all appearances, one was witty and the other, simple. They were named Laurette and Lucie, and they were feather-makers, Rue Saint-Denis. I have not met them since. And, by the powers! it is my fault, I am a caitiff! I had only to go into all the feather shops in the Rue Saint Denis; in truth, I have not yet been in a situation to play the gallant with young girls—to offer them a visit to the theatre and a supper afterwards—and that is the very least one can offer to renew an acquaintance, but now I am in funds, what prevents me from going in search of the little girls? The very thought of it makes me smile! it recalls my palmy days. That is settled; before I begin to look for Gustave, I am going to inquire for Laurette and Lucie, and this very evening, after my dinner, I'll begin my hunt for the feather-makers."

Cherami dined, acquitting himself like one who had not breakfasted twice. Then, his head rather inflamed by a bottle of old pommard, he bravely set forth to walk down the Rue Saint-Denis, looking from right to left to discover the

feather-makers; he did not go far before he perceived one of these establishments. Then he went up to the shop, opened the door and proudly presented himself, casting glances on all the young girls that he saw at the counter.

The head saleswoman looked at this gentleman who had come to pose as Spartacus in the middle of the shop, where he was staring at every one without speaking, and said to him,—

"Monsieur, will you kindly tell me what you desire?"

Cherami, who wanted to give himself time to examine all the workwomen, of whom there were a dozen in the shop, answered, drawling his words,—

"A thousand pardons, madame, I undoubtedly came in for something, but I don't see what I was looking for—no—I don't see it."

"If monsieur will tell me what he is looking for, I will inform him at once if we have got it here."

"Well, madame, I am looking for some children's caps. It's for a boy of five years."

All the young girls in the shop burst into a shout of laughter, but the lady at the desk made a cantankerous face as she answered,—

"Monsieur must have thought that he had come into a hatter's."

"Have I made a mistake then? Pray, pardon me; so sorry. These feathers were the cause of

it. They put so many feathers on hats now. Accept my excuses, madame, your very humble servant."

And having bowed very graciously, Cherami left the shop, saying to himself,—

"Here's one shop visited; the trick is done so far as that is concerned. If none of them are worse than that! My two little girls are not there. Let us pass on to another."

A little farther on Cherami saw another shop where they sold feathers and flowers, and there he went in in the same manner, and made the same pose. An old lady said to him,—

"We are waiting for monsieur to explain to us what he wishes."

"By Jove, madame," answered Cherami, as he examined the young girls, of whom there were not so many as in the first shop, "I should like—I wish to have a blue or a black coat, but made in the latest fashion, and which above all will fit me well. I don't care anything about the price, but the coat must be well built."

"You are not at a tailor's, monsieur," answered the old lady with a haughty expression, while the young girls looked at each other and laughed heartily, but the old lady imposed silence, and resumed,—"You could not have looked to see what this shop contained, monsieur."

"What! am I not in an outfitter's shop for both sexes?"

"No, monsieur, we sell only feathers and flowers."

"Oh, a thousand pardons, madame. But your shop rather resembles that of the Prophète. It is not so well lighted, I confess, but these flowers, these garlands, are all so pretty, and in Paris the outfitter's shops are decorated like the theatres. Receive my excuses, madame."

"Two of them," said Cherami, on finding himself again in the street. "My pleasing grisettes are not here yet. Patience! we shall get there. Ah, I see another feather dealer's down there. They swarm in this street. Well, here goes!"

In this third shop Cherami asked for shirts, as he passed in review all the workwomen and the apprentices without finding those whom he sought. He had the same success in obtaining a laugh from these young ladies, and a very dry response from the mistress of the house.

In a fourth shop Cherami, after having looked about him for some time on all sides, exclaimed,—

"I don't see it; it's very singular. I can't see it; however, it seems to me I saw several hung up for show."

"Monsieur, will you kindly tell us what you want?" said the lady at the desk.

"Madame, I should like to buy a Bayonne ham, the very best that can be had."

This time the laughter was general, and the

mistress of the house shared the hilarity of her workwomen, so that Cherami was enabled to examine the young girls who were working at his leisure. At length, when the gayety was a little calmed, the lady said, smiling again,—

"Monsieur, we don't sell hams here. What kind of a shop do you suppose you have got into?"

"A thousand pardons, madame, but is not this a shop where they sell things in the eating line?"

"No, monsieur, it is a flower and feather shop."

"What a great idiot I am! but I must tell you what caused me to make this mistake. It was these birds which I saw exposed in the show case. I said to myself, 'there's some game there, so they must sell comestibles.' "

"These are birds of paradise, monsieur, as you may see. They put them on ladies' headdresses, but do not eat them."

"Birds of paradise! Excuse me; they are indeed in paradise, since they dwell with such amiable ladies. I repeat my excuses, and beg you to accept my compliments."

Cherami left the fourth shop saying to himself,—

"They are not here either, and I shan't catch my hare this evening; this is enough of it for to-day; but nevertheless I am satisfied with the effect I produced at the last feather-maker's; the laughter was general, the mistress of the

place herself laughed like a little madwoman. It is very refreshing to see merriment shining on all these feminine faces and all because I asked for a ham. In fact, a ham was more comical than a coat, shirts or a cap. Well, to-morrow I must be looking for something funnier still. I shall find it, I am never at a loss. While waiting let's go and have a game of pool at my accustomed café. When my pockets are well furnished, I play magnificently, I handle the cue superbly. I am sure to win, according to this proverb, 'The water always runs to the river.' "

The next day after his dinner, Cherami directed his steps, as on the evening before, towards the Rue Saint-Denis.

"I know very well," he said to himself, "just how far I came yesterday evening, and just where I ought to begin to-day. I have something very droll to ask. I shall make them laugh. I only hope the mistresses of the shops will be unable to keep serious. They will believe they are at the Palais-Royal theatre when Grassot plays 'la Garde-Malade,' or the 'Vieux Loup de mer.' "

But since the evening before, several things had transpired in the Rue Saint-Denis, which our follower of grisettes could not divine. In this neighborhood, where there is so much trade, petty brokers or agents go about almost every day early in the morning to inquire as to the state of trade, the objects in demand, what people

wish to buy or sell; this is vulgarly called "canvassing." But one of these canvassers coming into a feather-maker's the workwomen said to him laughing,—"Have you brought us any caps? Some one was inquiring for them yesterday evening."

"Some caps? You are joking!"

"Not a bit of it."

And thereupon they related to this gentleman the visit they had received the evening before. This made the agent laugh and it ended there. But in another shop they spoke of a gentleman who had come in and inquired for a coat. Then he exclaimed,—

"That is singular; at one of the other shops he went in and asked for a cap. Will this be the same personage?"

Then it piqued the curiosity of the master of the shop and he cried,—

"I must go to my fellow dealers and inquire if they also have seen this gentleman!"

And the agent said:—"You are right, we must clear this up, for all this looks like a joke that some one has agreed to play on you; I will go with you."

These gentlemen were soon fully informed in regard to the visit which Cherami had made the evening before to the four shops; but they had also acquired the certainty that he had not been anywhere else. The feather-makers were one and

all warned; those who had not received a visit from this jocular gentleman said to themselves,—

"This party will perhaps begin again to-morrow, we must prepare to receive him well."

The feather-makers to whom he had been to inquire for a cap, a coat, shirts, and a ham, said to their fellow-tradesmen,—

"Do let us come to your place this evening to await this gentleman, that we may take part in the reception you are going to give him."

Everything being agreed on, in the evening they divided into groups, and impatiently waited for the gentleman of the evening before to present himself.

Our hunter of feather-makers came into the Rue Saint-Denis entirely void of suspicion as to what they had plotted against him; he gesticulated with his walking stick, looked to the right and left, then he said,—

"I went in there—and there also; I recognize the shops perfectly. Good! here is the third, there is but one more to pass—the fourth, and here it is; yes, I recognize the lady at the desk, she looked very amiable and laughed with everybody. Now I will go into the first one I see, and we'll have a good laugh. My request will be so comical, that the young women will laugh heartily, and I shan't be able to keep serious. Ah, here is a feather-maker's! a fine shop; let's go in."

Cherami gained the shop at a bound, he went in, assumed a graceful pose, and stared at the young ladies without noticing several young men who, as he came in, withdrew behind the doors.

The head woman at the desk looked at him in a very peculiar way, but asked him in a polite tone what he desired.

Then Cherami answered, looking as sweet as possible,—

"What do I want? By Jove, fair lady, mine is a very simple need. I should like to have—I hope you have one—I should like to have a broom handle."

"Certainly, we can let you have one," answered the lady immediately, "That will be very easy, for we have just laid in a stock of them. You could not have gone to a better place."

While Cherami listened in astonishment to this answer, which he was far from expecting, the young men who, quite by chance, had provided themselves with broom handles with which to give the joker they expected a basting, left their hiding-places, and fell on him in short order, shouting,—

"So you want some broomstick! well, you shall have it; to teach you to come into shops, as you did yesterday evening, to make game of honest tradespeople. All right! here's your broom."

Cherami, who had not expected this attack,

tried to parry their blows with his walking-stick; but it was ineffectual in the struggle against the weapons of his adversaries; he thought only of retreat and shouted,—

"Messieurs, I will wait for you in the street—I defy you all, one after the other."

But no one responded; they pushed him outside and shut the door on him. Rather ashamed of the result of his joking, our man who had received a too-well-applied blow from a broom handle on his left eye, went off holding his handkerchief to the wounded member, saying,—

"What a fool of an idea that was to ask for a broomstick. This time I caught my hare!"

Cherami's left eye was so greatly damaged and retained for so long the marks of the blows he had received, that for six weeks "handsome Arthur" was obliged to keep his room, since he could not very well go out with a bandage on his face.

Madame Louchard, who was often ordered to dress the wounded eye, one day said to her lodger,—

"Why, how in the world did you get such a club as this?"

"You call that a club, amiable hostess, that would be a deuced queer game where they had handfuls of clubs like these."

"You've been fighting again?"

"This time I must confess that they beat me.

I was not the stronger, but there was a battalion against me."

"This wasn't a sword stroke that you received here?"

"No, unluckily a sword would destroy your eye, but it would not make it start out of your head. However, it was all on account of two young girls that I received that."

"So you had to have two this time? Good heavens! I have reason to hate men."

"In fact, this retreat has obliged me to be economical; I have given you a fine sum on account."

"Twenty-five francs, you call that a fine sum on account."

"Everything is relative. I don't habitually give you more than a hundred sous. Presently I shall be my own man again."

"And run again after your young girls, too."

"No, on the faith of a gentleman, I shall not begin that again. I've had enough of it. I've caught my hare. I'm going to try and find my friend Gustave, who has perhaps returned to Paris, while I have been keeping my room. My first visit will be to his uncle, a rather unamiable individual who always looks cross-wise at me; but provided he tells me where his nephew is, I will allow him to put out his tongue at me if that will afford him any pleasure."

Some days later, Cherami could go out, and without his bandage; his eye had resumed its normal aspect. Our man had made a careful toilet, his boots were blacked, his hat and coat brushed carefully; he took his walking-stick, got into the omnibus which went from Belleville, took a check and arrived at the banker's in the Faubourg Montmartre.

This time Cherami did not stop at the porter's. He went straight to the offices, where he found the same clerk still occupied in adding up columns of figures.

Veritably there are in banking-houses clerks who pass almost their entire day in adding up figures. When these people go to sleep they must incessantly see figures dancing and tumbling around them. What a sweet existence, and what pretty dreams!

Cherami stopped before the old clerk who did not raise his face any more than he had done on previous occasions, but uttered the same low sound which would accompany a machine,—

"Six—eight—fourteen—twenty-seven—thirty, etc., etc."

"Say now, good man, have you never left off since the last time I was here?" cried Cherami, striking with his walking-stick on the clerk's desk. "Confound it! if so, you are no ordinary clerk, you are a living logarithm; a machine to figure, for which they ought to have taken out a

brevet invention. You ought to ask a high price for your services."

The old clerk confined himself to answering, without raising his eyes,—

"Don't tap like that on my ledger. Can't you see that you are making a lot of dust?"

"Yes, certainly I see that I am making a good deal of dust. Your office boys don't clean every day, or so it seems."

"Thirty-five—forty-four—fifty-three."

"Ah, now, all your energies are put in movement; I should like, however, not to be obliged to address myself to your patron, M. Grandcourt, seeing that we don't get on very well together. Come, papa Double Zero, tell me if the banker's nephew, if Gustave has returned from his visit to Germany? I must speak with him, it is important, very important; it is his happiness that I wish to assure."

"Well, take eighty from one hundred and sixty, and there remains—"

"Oh, this is too much. They ought to send him to the exhibition."

And after giving a second blow with his stick to the desk, which sent the pounce and the ink flying into the old clerk's face, Cherami strode towards the banker's room, and found the latter in the act of reading the newspapers. At the sight of Cherami, whom he recognized immediately, although his costume had suddenly changed

for the better, M. Grandcourt made a slight grimace. Our visitor, on the contrary, tried to smile and bowed graciously.

"I have the honor of wishing you good morning."

"Good morning, monsieur."

"Do you remember me, by any chance?"

"Perfectly, monsieur. Besides you are not at all changed, except as to your toilet, which I congratulate you on having renewed."

"Ah, you perceive that. You pay attention to dress, according to what I see."

"It seems to me that one can't help seeing such things."

"I meant to say that you attach importance to it; that you judge a man by his coat."

"Monsieur, was it to know my opinion on this subject that you came to see me?"

"No, oh, no. I care nothing at all about the opinion of others. I know my own worth and that suffices me."

"I congratulate you, monsieur, on knowing your own value; it is quite possible that the world does not suspect it."

Cherami bit his lips and twisted his whiskers, as he muttered,—

"This devil of a man is not at all changed. He is still satirical, and full of raillery. I don't despise wit of this type, it stirs and exhilarates. If one were to respond to it, the conversation would have a good deal more salt."

Monsieur Grandcourt repressed a slight smile and lay back in his armchair, crossing his legs, like one who is waiting for what will be said to him.

"I'm willing to wager any amount that you can guess what I came for," ventured Arthur Cherami, at length.

"That is possible, monsieur," answered M. Grandcourt dryly. "However, I might be mistaken."

"I called again to ask you where your nephew is, my friend Gustave?"

"He's travelling, monsieur."

"He's travelling still? But for all that, he must be somewhere?"

"He was in Berlin not so very long ago," answered the elder gentleman.

"'Not so very long ago?' That is rather vague, but he must be continually writing to you, and probably you answer him."

"There is not the slightest doubt of that."

"Consequently, he tells you where you must address your letters. Well, pray have the kindness to give me this address, in order that I may write to Gustave at once. I have some important news to give him that will make him very happy, and which will probably hasten his return to Paris. When one can give pleasure to a friend, it seems to me that one cannot act with too much promptitude. Are you not of my opinion in regard to this?" said Cherami anxiously.

"Perhaps, monsieur, that depends upon what result this pleasure you are so desirous of procuring for your friend, is likely to have. What is this happy news that you are in such a hurry to transmit to my nephew, that he may hasten his return? Can you not impart it to me?"

"I might think you very curious, were you not my friend's uncle, but on that account, I excuse you. The little woman whom Gustave adored, whom he still adores, at least so he told me before setting out on his journey, that charming Fanny, —and the fact is, she is really very pretty, I had the opportunity of examining her quite at my ease, when I went to her house; a refined face, a spirituelle expression, a wheedling voice, and just enough of a foot to say that she has one—"

"And what about this Fanny, monsieur?"

"Well, dear uncle, she is a widow."

"Why, monsieur, I've known that for some time past. She's a widow because her husband blew out his brains, which doesn't indicate that he was happy in his domestic life."

"Pardon me, he killed himself because he was ruined—unlucky speculations at the Bourse. But it's not the defunct who is in question, but his widow. Since the woman whom Gustave adores is free, what prevents his—later on, I don't say immediately, but in fact, when the period of mourning is past—"

"So, monsieur, it is to reanimate the foolish

passion that my nephew experienced for a woman who jilted him, that you insist upon knowing where he is. You hope that when he receives your letter, he will start immediately on his return to Paris."

"I'm even capable of going to look for him myself, wherever he is, if the journey be not too long and not too expensive. I would go third-class, it's all the same to me. One must make sacrifices for friendship's sake."

"You need not take that trouble, monsieur, as I think myself that my nephew will come back quite soon enough to see this Fanny again; and as I flatter myself that when he does, he will no longer dream at all of that young woman, I shall not give you his address."

"Do you mean it? You are still as close-fisted and tyrannical as ever."

"One is not a tyrant, monsieur, because he prevents a heedless fellow from doing foolish things. I know very well, that now it is the custom to give that name to those who wish that law, customs and persons should be respected, that age should still be honored, parents revered and cherished, and that people should not smoke in a room where there are ladies; if it is thus you understand the term, I am a tyrant, monsieur, and I glory in it."

Cherami walked impatiently about the room, muttering,—

"You are going about with me, there is no question of that at all. Once, twice, will you give me Gustave's address?"

"A hundred times no."

"Then, good afternoon, I've caught my hare."

Cherami left the banker's furious, but said to himself,—

"If I had an uncle like that, I would disinherit him."

For several days Cherami went every morning to inquire of the porter at the banker's house, whether the young traveller had arrived, but as he obtained only negative answers, he got tired of uselessly doing the same thing over and over, and confined himself to going there once a week. However, time rolled by and Cherami, who again had nothing but his income to live on, had not the price of a cigar in his pocket. But winter had given way to spring, fine weather had returned, and the ci-devant "handsome Arthur" walked about more than ever, in search of acquaintances. One morning, in front of the Château-d'Eau, he perceived two young girls who looked as if they were watching for an omnibus. He advanced towards them, saying,—

"By all the powers! I fully believe these are my charming feather-makers. Why, yes, they are Mesdemoiselles Laurette and Lucie."

On hearing themselves named, the young girls turned and looked at this gentleman who made

them a fine bow. Suddenly the brunette, Laurette, exclaimed,—

"Ah, I recognize monsieur now. It was you who talked with us at the Porte Saint-Martin last summer."

"Yes, mesdemoiselles, exactly so. Are you going to Belleville again?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Are you going again to the Park Saint-Fargeau restaurant?"

"No, monsieur, but we have a friend who lives at the village of l'Avenir."

"And where if you please is the village of l'Avenir? I've never been able to read into the future* and I did not know that it had a village."

"It is at the Romainville wood, a little way before you get there, on high grounds which overlook a great extent of country. They've built some houses there that are nearly all alike, small, but very nice and well decorated, and each one with its little garden. As they are not dear and the terms of payment are easy, the village of l'Avenir has grown up all at once, as if by enchantment."

"By Jove! I shall buy a house there myself as soon as I shall be in funds. Ah, mesdemoiselles, I have been looking for you for a long time. If you did but know all I have done to find you."

"And why did you want to find us, monsieur?"

*L'Avenir—The future.

"To offer to take you to the theatre and give you a supper."

"Why, the idea! but perhaps we should not have accepted."

"That, perhaps, reassures me. There is nothing improper about my proposition."

"Certainly monsieur looks as if one might trust him."

"Deuce take it!" said Cherami, "what a misfortune that I haven't a sou. I'll wager that they would accept now."

"And where did you look for us, monsieur?"

"Why, at all the feather dealers in the Saint-Denis quarter."

"Ah, you would have looked for a long time, we aren't in feathers now, we have changed."

"And what are you in now?"

"In pearls; we thread pearls."

"That's a very pretty trade; I have never worked in pearls myself; however, I should very much like to do so."

"Laurette, here is our bus, come. Good-by, monsieur."

"In what neighborhood do you live, if you please?"

"In the Rue des Arcis."

The two young girls got into an omnibus and Cherami saw them again depart. He heaved a slight sigh, murmured against fate, smote his

trousers with his walking-stick, and continued his walk. But he had not taken a hundred steps when he found himself face to face with a young lady in mourning, who stopped him and addressed him very graciously. For his part, Cherami, bowed low, for he had recognized Auguste Monleard's young widow.

"Good day, monsieur, do you recognize me?" said Fanny, smiling.

"Ah, madame, I should have to be afflicted with myopia of the very worst kind, if having once seen you I should have forgotten your charming face."

"Mourning changes one so much."

"Whether you wear mourning or pink, or if you were to wear nothing at all, I guarantee that you would still be charming. I should even prefer the last fashion."

"You're very gallant, M. Cherami."

"I am happy to see that madame remembers my name."

"I have not forgotten it, monsieur, and I was wishing very much to see you again."

"Really? Had I but known it, madame, I should have been to see you long before this."

"I wanted in the first place to thank you for the kindness you showed in going to my father's to fulfil a very painful mission."

"Oh, don't speak of that, I beg of you. Have you any other commission with which you would

like to charge me? I am yours to command. I have nothing to do, make use of me."

"I thank you, M. Cherami. Do you know M. Gustave Darlemont?"

"Do I know him! He is my best friend, my Euryalus, my Orestes, my Pythias. He is a charming fellow, who deserves to be dearly loved."

"Monsieur Cherami, tell me frankly, and it seems to me that now you have not the slightest reason to hide the truth from me, was it Gustave who begged you to fight a duel with my husband?"

"Ah, you know, madame, that it was I who—"

"Who had a duel with M. Monleard; of course. Oh, reassure yourself, I bear no grudge against you at all for that."

"She's delightful," said Cherami to himself. "I believe she would have wished nothing further if I had killed her husband."

"Only, monsieur," resumed Fanny, "will you tell me why you called me perfidious when you saw me passing?"

"By Jove, fair dame, the thing is easy to understand. I had dined with poor Gustave at the restaurant where you were holding your wedding feast. During the whole meal my dear friend was so disconsolate that it made me sorry to see him. He neither ate nor drank. I was obliged to dine for two, and to restrain him every moment

that he might not go to look for you in the midst of your wedding feast."

"Really, poor fellow, was he so grieved as that?"

"In the evening he spoke to your sister and made her promise that in coming back to the ball she would allow him to have an interview with you."

"My sister never told me a word about that. How singular Adolphine is."

"It seems, on the contrary, that she sent to warn Gustave's uncle, in order that he might come and take his nephew away."

"What did she want to meddle with it for?"

"The uncle came and obliged his nephew to follow him; I remained alone. I had drunk not a little punch, I had been to a wedding they were holding just above yours, and on leaving there, heated by the dance, and still thinking of my poor friend, I saw you and allowed that word to slip from me. To-day I withdraw it, asking you a thousand pardons for having pronounced it."

"You are quite forgiven. So Gustave had nothing to do with that duel?"

"He was completely ignorant of it until he returned from Spain."

"And do you know where he is now? Gustave, I mean."

"Alas! no, in Prussia, I believe. I have been

several times to inquire, but he has an uncle who is quite the most disagreeable man I ever saw. Had he not been so nearly related to my friend, I should already have dealt him a good sword stroke. However, Gustave must come back soon; I am watching for his return."

"When you have any news of him will you be kind enough to give it to me? Here is my new address."

"Believe me, madame, I shall be only too happy to prove my zeal for you."

"Good-by, M. Cherami."

"Madame, rest assured of my devotion."

The widow departed, and Cherami said to himself,—

"I don't know whether she loves Gustave sincerely, but one thing is certain she is burning to see him again."

Fanny had been a widow for more than six months, when one day as he went to M. Grandcourt's dwelling, Cherami saw Gustave leave it. He uttered an exclamation of joy and threw himself into the arms of the young traveller, exclaiming, 'Tandem denique' here he is at last. This is lucky. Hang it, your absence has been long enough, but it is to be hoped that it will be the last."

"How do you do, my dear Arthur?" said Gustave, shaking Cherami's hand. "Were you going to my uncle's?"

"To your uncle's? Confound it! he's a nice fellow, is your uncle. Don't speak of it. Why I have come here a hundred times. I wanted to have your address, to write to you, to go and see you, but not the slightest information would your uncle give me. When did you come back?"

"Yesterday evening at nine o'clock. But why were you so desirous of learning my address? What had you to impart to me that was so important?"

"Your uncle has told you nothing, then."

"We talked of business this morning—speculation, that is all."

"The old fox! there's no danger of your hearing from him what would interest you most."

"Then you tell me at once, Cherami."

"Your flame, the little woman with whom you were so much in love, so much—"

"Fanny! good God, is she dead?"

"Why no, she isn't dead, she is in delightful health. She is still as pretty as ever, more so in fact; she is a widow."

"A widow! my God, is it possible?"

"It is more than possible, it is certain. Her husband gambled at the Bourse, and ruined himself there. Then crack, a pistol shot—you understand."

"Oh, what a misfortune! Why it is frightful, that is! And how long ago was this?"

"Almost immediately after your departure."

"Poor Fanny! she who thought she was going to be so happy in that union. What grief she must have experienced. What tears she must have shed!"

"My dear Gustave, you don't know that young woman at all. She has very great strength of mind. She received the news of her husband's death with a courage, a stoicism worthy of those Lacedemonians, who sent their sons into battle with the command that they should return as victors or not at all.

"How could you know all this, Cherami?"

"By Jove, because her husband entrusted me with the fulfilment of his last wishes and commissioned me to inform his wife of his death."

"You, who had fought a duel with him?"

"Exactly so, that duel rendered us the best friends in the world. I will tell you all about that, more in detail, another time. But you must know that the young widow, who is already almost consoled, never ceases to speak of you, to inquire about you, to ask whether you will return soon."

"Is it really so? You are not deceiving me, Fanny thinks of me?"

"It is as I have the honor of telling you, and between ourselves, I don't believe she ever had any love for her husband. That would explain why she regretted him so little."

"I am utterly surprised by all you tell me. I

can't get over it. Fanny a widow! Fanny free!"

"Yes, and that for six months past. By the way—and that is the first question I ought to put to you—do you still love her?"

"Do I still love her? Why, my dear Arthur, can you doubt it?"

"It seems to me that you have had plenty of time and opportunity to forget her. I think I remember that it was with this hope that you went away?"

"That is possible, but I could not manage it; I tried to distract myself, to fall in love with other women; I thought that I should one day be—but the illusion was quickly dissipated, and then the last time I met Fanny she was so amiable to me that the remembrance of it did not help to lessen my love."

"Then you love her? You are sure of it?"

"Of course, my dear fellow. But why do you ask me that?"

"Why because—I had thought of something, and if you were no longer fond of the widow—but as you are still so, that is all right and done with; I believe that now things will go agreeably for you."

"This very day I will go and see Adolphine, Fanny's sister."

"Why not go and see Fanny herself? It seems

to me that would be the shortest way. I can give you her address."

"You're not thinking of what you say, my dear fellow. How can I go immediately to that young woman's house? I, who have not seen her since her marriage. It would be unconventional. She must give me permission first."

"Since she invited you to go and see her as a married woman, it seems to me she can well receive you as a widow."

"Of course, but not immediately. I must see her again before that, at her father's house. She must go there often now."

"I would much rather you went to see the little widow at her own house, than at her father's."

"Why is that?"

"Ah, why? That is another result of the idea I mentioned to you just now. But do as you think best. The principal thing is, that you are going to be happy and remain in Paris, for I was lonely while you were away. 'Pon my honor, I missed you."

"You're a good fellow, Arthur. I am really sensible of the interest you take in all that concerns me, and you, my dear fellow, are you fortunate? Are you doing a good business?"

"I can't do a bad one, since I do none at all. I am contented, because I am philosophical. I am happy—when I have caught my hare; but I have not done so for some time past."

"I'll wager that you've no money."

"You would win often in wagering that."

"And you didn't mention it to me? Am I no longer your friend?"

"My dear Gustave, you make me ashamed. Why, I owe you some already, and—"

"What does that matter, as if one took account of that between friends. Is he not the more fortunate who is able to oblige a friend?"

"Confound it! if all my former friends thought like you—"

Gustave took his pocket-book, drew a bank note from it, and slipped it into Cherami's hand, saying to him,—

"Here, my friend, when you want any more, let me know. Now good-by, I must leave you. I am going to M. Gerbault's. To-day I dine with my uncle, but if you like to dine with me to-morrow, let me find you in front of the Passage de l'Opéra, at six o'clock."

"If I like! by all the powers! why it will be a festival for me."

"In that case, good-by until to-morrow."

Gustave had already gone some distance, and Cherami was still looking after him and saying,—

"Here is indeed a pearl of friendship. I don't mean the pearls in which Mesdemoiselles Laurette and Lucie work, but a real friend is worth more than all the treasures of Golconda, and much rarer. I was on the point of telling him of a certain

idea which had come to me regarding little Adolphine, the little widow's sister, but I reflected that I should do better to say nothing about it. What use would it be to tell him that I think poor Adolphine is in love with him, since he still loves Fanny? It would trouble him and that is all, and he would not dare to go to Papa Gerbault's to talk to his dear Fanny. I most decidedly did right to remain silent. Let us see what he has slipped into my hand. Generous Gustave, it would be just like him to have lent me five hundred francs again."

Cherami unfolded the bank note which he held tightly in his hand, and was immensely surprised to find that it was for a thousand francs.

After making quite sure that he was not mistaken, Cherami thrust the bill into his cigar case, muttering,—

"A thousand francs—he gave me a thousand francs saying, 'When you need any more let me know.' By Jove! this unexpected fortune upsets me. This young man's conduct moves me, makes me almost blush for mine. Come, Arthur, my fine fellow, are you going to continue your pranks and follies? And because you have met an honest fellow who gives you money without stint, are you going as usual to spend that money as you spent your fortune? Why no, by the powers, that shall not be. I shall show myself worthy of being Gustave's friend. Dating from

this day I will change my conduct, and put water in my wine; and to begin with, I will go and dine to-day for thirty-two sous."

While Cherami was making these fine resolutions, Gustave hurried to M. Gerbault's. Adolphine was alone, and was trying, by practising on her piano, to find some distraction for the secret trouble which was consuming her heart. For some time past Fanny's sister had been quite changed. One cannot be a prey to real love with impunity. At nineteen, such a feeling occupies all our time and our thoughts. The young girl's features were altered. Her face, thinner and paler than of old, wore always an expression of melancholy, which she endeavored, though in vain, to hide with a smile when in company; her sister's society could not afford her distraction, for the latter talked incessantly of the one she would have liked to forget.

Madeleine, who had recognized Gustave, did not think it necessary to announce him, and allowed him to go into the room where her mistress was playing the piano. The young man advanced quite softly and placed himself behind Adolphine, and it was not until a moment or so had passed that the young girl, in looking in the mirror that was above the piano, saw who was behind her. Then an exclamation escaped her. She murmured Gustave's name, her face became frightfully pale, and she lowered her eyes.

"Good heavens, my dear Adolphine, what is the matter with you?" cried the young man, frightened; "would you like me to call some one?"

But Adolphine signed to him to stay, and pressed his hand, stammering,—

"It is nothing, the surprise overmastered me, I so little expected to see you, but it is past. So, M. Gustave, here you are back again."

"Yes, my kind little sister, you no longer expected me then. You thought that you would never see me again."

"Oh, I don't say that. I thought, on the contrary, that your absence was long this time."

"I have been away for nearly seven months, and during that time—I have learned what has taken place here. Many of the events—"

"Oh, you know?"

"Yes, I know that your sister is a widow."

"Who has told you that already?"

"It was Cherami, you know him? The gentleman who was with me on the day of—"

"Oh, I know the gentleman. It was he also who came to tell us of poor Auguste's tragic death; for, I don't know how it happens that your M. Cherami is always mixed up in everything. Everybody takes him for a confidant. How long have you been back?"

"Since yesterday evening only."

"It was kind of you to think of coming here.

My father is out, but it will not be long before he comes in."

"So much the better, for I shall be delighted to see him. I hope that now he will not think unfavorably of my coming here as I used to."

Adolphine could not refrain from starting nervously as she answered,—

"Oh, you wish to come to our house again. Yes, I understand, you no longer fear to meet Fanny."

"Do you think that I still ought to avoid her presence? Tell me, my dear Adolphine."

"Me, oh, I think nothing about it. Why should you imagine that I think that? Besides I cannot see into your heart, and I don't know if you still have the same feeling for her as you had formerly."

"Oh, I can freely tell you, who have always treated me as your brother; besides, why should I keep it a secret from you—yes, I love Fanny as of old. Her image has never for a single day ceased to present itself to my thoughts. My love, even without hope, was ever the same. Ah, judge whether I can cease to love her now, when it is again permitted me to hope for happiness in the future."

Adolphine had passed her hand over her forehead, she made an effort over herself, as she answered,—

"Oh, it is beautiful to love like that, with a

constancy that time and absence cannot move. It is beautiful, and a woman could not know how to sufficiently repay love and devotion so true and so pure as yours."

"And now that we are alone, tell me, my dear Adolphine, do you think that Fanny will afford me a kindly welcome? Do you think that my constancy will touch her, that her heart will respond to it? Ambition and the desire to shine made her prefer M. Monleard to me. I can quite forgive her youth for having listened rather to vanity than to love, for I don't think that she ever had much love for her husband."

"Oh, no, I don't think so either."

"Then his death did not cause her any great grief?"

"She greatly regretted his fortune, that was all. She has two thousand five hundred francs income. My father offered to take her back to live with us, but she preferred to remain alone."

"Two thousand five hundred, that's very little, when one has had a carriage at one's orders."

"It's quite enough for one who does not place happiness in riches."

"You think so, Adolphine, but you have not the same tastes as your sister. All women do not resemble you. Fanny loves society, she is perhaps rather coquettish, it is a very excusable defect. Thank heaven, my position now enables me to gratify the tastes of her who will be my

companion. I earn ten thousand francs. I can't put a carriage into her coach house, nor horses into her stable, but she will be able to use them whenever it is agreeable to her. Adolphine, you don't answer me. Do you think that Fanny would be willing to be my wife?" said the young man anxiously.

"Oh, now that you are earning ten thousand francs per annum, no doubt she would be willing to do so."

Gustave sighed and muttered, "Then if I had not that to offer her, she would refuse me again. Is that what you meant to say, my dear Adolphine?"

"Why, no. Good heavens! I did not mean to say anything to make you feel grieved, M. Gustave, I was wrong to say that. Fanny must love you. Why should she not love you? She would be very ungrateful not to do so, for you have given her so many proofs of your love and constancy. You have forgiven her the sorrow which she caused you. She certainly must love you. You will be happy with her but—do you see—I can't always talk of that because it makes me uneasy—it troubles me for you. Good heavens, I feel quite bewildered, for I can't understand—"

Gustave looked more attentively at the young girl and exclaimed,—

"Why, I hadn't noticed it before, but how

you have changed, how thin you are. Have you been ill, little sister?"

"Oh, do you see it now? Oh, why, no, I am not ill. There is nothing the matter with me. I don't know what has made me change," said Adolphine.

"Have you pain anywhere? do you feel any particular malady?"

Adolphine raised her beautiful eyes towards heaven, saying, "No, I have no pain."

"I don't like that you should be sick. I want to see you again with the beautiful color that you used to have, and now that I have come back, I shall watch over your health," Gustave assured her.

"Thank you, thank you, you will come and see us often, then?"

"I hope so, indeed; and your sister, does she often come here?"

"On Thursdays, because we have company then, and sometimes she comes during the day," answered the girl.

Monsieur Gerbault's arrival put an end to this conversation. He welcomed Gustave very kindly, nor did the latter hide the pleasure he experienced in being again his guest; he did not speak of Fanny to him, not wishing in their first meeting to mention his new hope, but he skilfully found a way to acquaint M. Gerbault with the position which he occupied, and the means it

afforded him of making the one whom he should marry happy.

Now that his eldest daughter was a widow, M. Gerbault saw nothing to prevent Gustave's meeting her, and he was the first to invite the young man to come to his house as he used. Gustave was delighted; he squeezed M. Gerbault's hand, pressed Adolphine's, and left without noticing that the latter's depression was increased.

CHAPTER V

A Complete Reform. Coquetries. The Pleasures and Pains of Love

The next day at six o'clock, Cherami, dressed with a care which restored his fine bearing and his elegance of former days, was walking up and down in front of the Passage de l'Opéra. Some of his friends, those who had participated in his pleasures, but who had not bowed to him since he had worn a shabby coat, had stopped and looked at him and made a movement to go toward him, but Cherami had, on each of these occasions, turned on his heel, remarking to himself, as he did so,—

"Go your way, you cads, I know your real worth now. You would not look at me when I was shabby. You only recognize me because I am well dressed. 'Retro!' I have had enough of such people."

It was not long before Gustave Darlemont arrived upon the scene. He was unable to restrain an exclamation of surprise as he looked at him who might again be called, as of old, "handsome Arthur."

"Confound it, my dear fellow, pardon the

astonishment I showed," said Gustave. "But really in the first moment I did not know you. Without complimenting you, you really look very nice, and wear your clothes as few fellows can."

"It is the remains of a former habit."

"And why have you made yourself so fine?"

"It is at least proper that I should do honor to such a friend as you."

"Come to dinner, and we will talk."

"I am entirely at your orders."

The gentlemen went to the Café Anglais, and Gustave said to his companion,—

"You order the dinner, you understand it better than I do."

"Excuse me, but I shall not order again," answered Cherami. "I always do so rashly and thoughtlessly, and I wish to do so no longer; it is for you to order."

"What does this mean? You, a man who knows how to live so well!"

"On the contrary, I have made a mess of it, but I have changed all that. Completely reformed; better late than never."

Gustave set to work on the menu, but his guest kept interrupting him. "Enough, that is quite sufficient—quite sufficient; and we will not change the wine."

"By Jove, my dear fellow, you need not take anything unless you like; but I'm going to order what I please. I haven't turned a hermit."

"Do so, it's yours to command, and mine to obey. I'll make myself tipsy if you exact it. I ought to obey you."

During the first course, Cherami put water in his wine, and ate and drank very soberly.

"Why, I hardly recognize you," said Gustave. "You are not at all as you were."

"So much the better. I no longer wish to be recognizable in that respect. But let us speak of your affairs. Have you been to Papa Gerbault's?"

"Yes, I saw Adolphine, Fanny's younger sister. She is ever kind and friendly, and disposed to serve me."

"I think her very sensitive in fact."

"Only, I thought her very changed; she is thin, her youthful freshness has disappeared. One would say the young girl had some deep sorrow."

"There would be nothing impossible in that, poor little thing. Did you tell her that you still loved her sister?"

"Certainly. I told her of all the hopes that Fanny's new position gave rise to. Oh, I made no secret of my love for her sister."

"That must have given her a great deal of pleasure," said Cherami, dryly.

"Adolphine is interested in my happiness; if she can serve me with Fanny, she will do so, I am sure."

"She is capable of it. But look you, if you will take my advice, you will go directly to the young widow's without allowing the little sister always to be a witness of your love. That is a dangerous occupation for a heart of nineteen. When one sees others love, it may give one a desire to love one's self."

"My dear Arthur, I ask nothing better than to go to Madame Monleard's, but first it is necessary that I should see her at her father's, that she may give me permission to go to her house."

"Be quite easy as to that. She will allow you to visit her. And your uncle, have you spoken to him of your new hopes?"

"No, indeed, he does not like Fanny. It will be quite time enough to tell him, when matters have come to a conclusion."

"Well, so be it. Now, if I should want to see you, where should I be able to find you? for I won't go to your uncle's again; he is a tantalizing old fellow, whom I don't understand at all. He has a way of looking at me that—if he were not your uncle, I assure you that we should already be at swords' points."

"My dear fellow, I assure you that my uncle is an excellent man; very just at bottom, a little stubborn when he has ill-judged anybody; but quite willing to reverse his judgment when it has been proved to him that he was wrong."

"That's acting generously at any rate."

"He has a prejudice against Fanny. He thinks her incapable of loving; but when she has made me happy, he will be the first to confess that he is wrong. As for myself, I have accepted a very pretty apartment in his house, where I shall remain until such time as I marry."

"In your uncle's house? Then one can't see you without his permission."

"You are mistaken. My apartment is altogether separate from his, on the second floor, at the front."

"And does the porter know you now?"

"Yes, be quite easy, he knows my name. Come, my dear fellow, let's have some champagne and drink to my love, to my union with Fanny."

"Do you hold with drinking champagne?"

"Certainly."

"Well, if you hold to it, though we might have contented ourselves with this bordeaux, which is perfect."

"Why, what signifies this wisdom? what revolution has taken place in you? who has worked this miracle?"

"Have you no suspicion as to who it is?"

"By Jove, no."

"Well, it is yourself, my dear Gustave."

"Me? that is impossible."

"It is, however, the truth. Twice have you

lent me money, and with so much kindness, generosity."

"Oh, I beg of you—"

"Let me speak, confound it. I am not humbugging you now, and you will believe me because there is no reason why I should lie. I have retrieved my course; I said to myself that if I were no longer young, I was not old enough at any rate to live at other people's expense; in fact, I no longer wish to throw money out of the window. Better still, I now experience the desire to do something; to work, to occupy myself. I despised clerks, people employed in offices—well now, find me such a place as that, my dear fellow, and I assure you that I will fulfil my duties in such a fashion that they won't discharge me."

Gustave took Cherami's hand and pressed it in his own, as he said,—

"What you wish to do is very right. I can't blame you for these good resolutions. If you persist in them, I will look about, and I shall find you something."

"Oh, I shall persist, it is a settled thing."

"Meanwhile, as one must never push matters to an extreme, there is no law against drinking champagne, provided we don't get tipsy on it."

"So be it, we'll have some."

"Well, here's to my success in love."

"To your success! But take my advice, do

the business yourself, and don't charge the little sister with it again."

"Do you think her capable of doing me an ill turn with Fanny, then?"

"No, God forbid that I should. She likes you too well to do you an ill turn with anybody. But I have noticed that in love, it is better never to employ an ambassador, it is time lost."

"I will follow your advice. On Thursday I shall see Fanny at her father's, and will ask her permission to call upon her."

"In that way," said Cherami to himself, "the poor little thing at least will not have them making love under her eyes."

Thursday arrived, and on that day some faithful friends and some acquaintances, who were less faithful, came in the evening to play a game of cards at M. Gerbault's. Among those who were faithful, they counted M. Clairval, and M. Batonnin. Among those who only came by chance, was sometimes Anatole de Raincy, who as a man of the world had not taken offence at Adolphine's refusal of his hand, and being still a great lover of music, he did not wish, on account of that, to renounce the pleasure of singing duets with her.

Since Fanny had been a widow, she came regularly to dinner every Thursday at her father's. Her sparkling conversation, her lively humor, which her widowhood had restrained for a fort-

night at the most, contributed not a little to the gathering in the evening. The young woman who knew that Anatole de Raincy had demanded Adolphine's hand, and had been refused, had not failed, on finding herself with that gentleman, to ogle him in a manner which might easily have turned his head, if the possession of a pretty voice had not been a primal necessity in order to charm this young man; and Fanny sang very little, and that little very badly.

As M. de Raincy had not responded to the glances of the pretty widow's eyes, the latter presently said to her sister,—

"Really this M. Anatole is a veritable canary. He must live only on chickweed."

Upon this particular day, on finding herself with her sister, whom she had not seen for a week, Adolphine felt an embarrassment which she endeavored to overcome by saying hastily,—

"I think that you will see someone here this evening whose presence will not be disagreeable to you."

"You don't say so, and whom do you expect this evening?"

"Monsieur Gustave Darlemont."

"Gustave, is it possible? What! Gustave has returned, and you did not tell me of it?"

"You've only just got here, I couldn't tell you before!"

"Why, how long has he been back? When did you see him?"

"He came to see us on Monday; I believe he got back the evening before."

"What! he has been here since Monday, and I didn't know it? And he is coming, you are quite sure of it? Did my father invite him for this evening?"

"My father did not positively invite him for this evening, but he knows that we receive on Thursdays, and he evinced a great desire to revisit us; besides, he knew that he should meet you here."

"Did he say much about me? Did he seem as if he still loved me? Tell me exactly what he said to you, little sister; omit nothing. It is very important that I should know where I stand."

Adolphine made an effort to compose herself, and answered in a voice tremulous with emotion,—

"Yes, M. Gustave told me that he still loved you, and that he had never ceased to think of you."

"Oh, that is nice. What constancy! and they say that men do not know how to be faithful. Poor men, how they are calumniated! Dear Gustave: then he is quite pleased at my being a widow."

"Do you really think he could say such a thing as that?"

"No, no, but he thinks it and that is enough; and he will be here. Good heavens, is my hair done right? It seems to me that this cap hides my forehead too much."

"You look very well; besides, people are always good-looking to those who like them."

"Oh, my darling, in order to please, one must always try to be pretty," and Fanny ran to a mirror, she put up her hair and took it down again, put on and took off her cap, and ended by throwing it aside, saying, "Really I look better with nothing on my hair."

"But sister, I thought that your mourning required—"

"My darling, I have been a widow now for more than six months. I have the right to dress my hair as I please, and when one has beautiful hair it is never a crime to show it."

During dinner Fanny did not cease talking of Gustave. Adolphine was silent. M. Gerbault allowed his eldest daughter to talk, but he preserved a serious expression, and frequently watched Adolphine. Since the latter had fainted on thinking that Gustave was dead, a sudden light had penetrated the mind of the father of the family; but he did not let it be seen. He respected the secret of his younger daughter, although in the depths of his heart her sufferings touched him more quickly because he saw no way of causing them to cease.

Fanny thought the dinner horribly long. She asked for coffee before her father had finished his dessert. Then she left the table at every moment to go and admire herself. This occurred so often, that M. Gerbault could not refrain from saying, smilingly,—

"My dear, for a widow, it seems to me that you are very coquettish."

Fanny hastily answered, "I think, father, it is more excusable in a widow to be coquettish, than in a married woman. At any rate, a widow is free."

"Yes, of course, above all when she has been a widow for a long time."

"Why, is six months nothing then, and I am in the seventh."

"Yes, indeed, but all the same the story of the 'Matrone D'Ephèse' does not seem to me more unlikely."

"What did she do, your 'Matrone D'Ephèse'. I do not know that history."

"It is only a story, but it might easily, in fact, become history."

"Ah, didn't the bell ring?"

"I heard nothing."

"How late your company comes."

"Do you think so? It's only seven o'clock."

"Your clock must be late."

"It is keeping good time."

"Oh, I don't know what is the matter with me, I can't keep still."

Adolphine followed her sister with her eyes, saying to herself,—

"Is it love for him that makes her so coquettish, so impatient? It is singular. When he used to come here before, I never thought of going to look at myself in the glass. I thought only of him and not of myself."

Finally the bell was heard. It was M. Clairval, a cold, phlegmatic, taciturn man. Then came Madame de Mirallon, who was always finely dressed, even when she went to a small evening party. Next arrived a lawyer and a doctor, great lovers of whist and who were always disputing about it; the one wishing to play "singleton" the other declaring that a good player never permitted himself to do so.

Each time the bell rang, Fanny quickly looked towards the door, and made a comical little face when she saw that it was not the one she expected who came into the room. She muttered to herself,—

"This gentleman is determined that his presence shall be desired," then she ran to her sister. "Adolphine, are you sure that you really told him Thursday? Perhaps you said another day."

"No, besides he knows very well that we always have received on Thursdays."

"He knows! he knows! When one travels so

much one may easily forget. It's past eight o'clock, and you see he has not come yet."

"Eight o'clock is not late. Be easy, he will come."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh, I am sure of it."

"You are quite persuaded that he still loves me."

"If it were not so, why should I have told you that he did?"

"Oh, my dear, people say so many things that they don't think."

"I don't understand how anyone who is in love can say what is not true."

"Oh, you make me laugh. It is in love above all, that people lie. There's the bell. This time it must be he."

Fanny was again deceived. It was M. Batonnin who presented himself, still with a smile on his lips and measuring his words.

"What a bore," murmured the young widow, making an impatient movement. "It's that ugly Batonnin, the man dolly, as we have named him in our circles."

"Don't you like that gentleman? He goes to your house, too."

"Oh, well, what does that prove? In society do people like all the persons they receive? Three parts of the time, on the contrary, the greatest pleasure one can take, is to pass in review those

who have called upon one and disparage them."

"Oh, what a sad pleasure. Why, with whom can you share it; for, in fact, if you talk ill of everybody—"

"They take a newcomer and go and sit down with him in a distant corner of the drawing-room, and there, under the pretext of making him acquainted with his society, they ridicule everybody. Oh, it is very amusing."

"But the newcomer, if he is not an idiot, must say to himself, 'As soon as am I gone, they will say the same of me.'"

"Oh, they don't even wait until he is gone to say it."

Monsieur Batonnin, after greeting M. Gerbault and the persons who were playing cards, approached the two sisters.

"How is the charming widow and her amiable sister? The rose and the rosebud, or rather two rosebuds, or two roses, for both one or the other being flowers, and flowers being sisters and having thorns—then—"

"Come, M. Batonnin, can't you decide upon it? I should like very much to know whether I am a rose or a rosebud," said Fanny, looking at the gentleman mockingly.

"Madame, being no longer a young lady, you are necessarily a rose."

"Well and good, and my sister is a rosebud."

"Yes, of course, only I notice with sorrow, that that charming rosebud has been drooping on its stalk for some time past."

"Adolphine, do you hear that? M. Batonnin thinks that you droop on your stalk, which probably means that you have lost your freshness."

"That is not exactly what I meant to say."

"Don't defend yourself, M. Batonnin; besides, you are right. For some time past my sister has been changed, she assures us that she is not ill, that she does not suffer, but I am persuaded that something is the matter with her, though she will not take me into her confidence."

"That is because I have nothing to confide to you," said Adolphine, in a serious tone, "and it seems to me that monsieur might have dispensed with leading to such a subject of conversation."

"Mademoiselle, excuse me, I should be very sorry to have vexed you. It was the friendship I bear for you that led me to—"

"Monsieur, I have never understood that friendship which leads one to say to people, 'Good heavens, how you are changed. You are pale, are you ill? You really look very bad in the face.' If the person to whom they say that is well, they cannot have seen her aright; if she is really suffering they run the risk of increasing her illness and frightening her as to her state. In one case or the other, you see, they would do better were they to remain silent. Such evi-

dences of interest resemble those of friends who come running very quickly when they have some bad news to tell us, but who never come when anything fortunate happens on which they could have congratulated us."

Monsieur Batonnin compressed his lips, and tried to find an answer, but nobody took any further notice of him, for the door of the drawing-room was opened again and this time it was Gustave who came in.

The young man, after shaking hands with M. Gerbault, advanced towards Adolphine and her sister; it was easily seen that he was moved, disturbed; but Adolphine, whose emotion was perhaps greater, hastily left her place, and after answering Gustave's greeting, went to talk with M. Clairval who was not then playing, in order that nothing might restrain the conversation, which he wished to have with her sister.

As for Fanny, she did not experience the slightest embarrassment. She smiled graciously at Gustave, welcomed him as though she had seen him the evening before, and showed him a place beside her, saying,—

"So you are back again, M. Traveller. Why, good heavens, you are imitating the Wandering Jew now. You are always on the march, never still in one place. Do you know, monsieur, that your friends cannot accommodate themselves to your long absences. Are you not going to

put an end to your peregrinations; unless, indeed, you are desirous of discovering a new world."

Gustave, quite bewildered by the cheerful tone in which the widow spoke to him, was unable for a moment to answer her. Fanny interpreted this to her advantage, and resumed, changing her manner however, this time, and assuming an almost sentimental expression,—

"A great many events have transpired since we last saw you."

"Yes, madame; I have heard of the loss you have sustained, and I beg you to believe that I felt for you in the sorrow you must have experienced."

"I do not doubt it, you are so sensitive, M. Gustave. Oh, yes, I have had a very cruel experience, although M. Monleard hardly deserves the tears I have shed for him. He was a very proud man, full of vanity, hard of heart, caring for no one but himself, fatuous, self-sufficient—but he is dead and I won't say any ill of him, although he left me in a very false position. Ah, had I but known, had I but foreseen, I have greatly regretted that I—that I—" Then suddenly changing her tone, and resuming her spritely manner, "You come from Berlin, is the life pleasurable there? are the balls brilliant? do the women dress with taste? do they go to the theatre there? They are very fond of music in Prussia; you must have often gone to concerts,

parties and plays. How fortunate men are; they can do whatever they please; while the poor women are obliged to remain at home, and often without anybody to keep them company. That is what I have been doing for the last six months, and I am bored to death."

"At least you have your sister to share your sorrows."

"My sister! yes, my sister is so cheerful. For some time past I don't know what is the matter with her, but she is a veritable extintinguisher; besides, as you are well aware, my temperament is different from Adolphine's. She is melancholy and I am very heedless; don't you remember that, Gustave? Good heavens, here am I calling you Gustave, as I did before my marriage, and perhaps it will vex you."

"Ah, you don't think that! It puts me in mind of such a happy time."

"Why it seems to me that that time has come back; for we are in the same position as we then were—almost."

Gustave could not help sighing when he heard that "almost." The young widow hastily resumed,—

"And now that I am free, that I am my own mistress, will you not do me the pleasure of coming to see me sometimes, M. Gustave? Will you not have a little pity for the loneliness of a poor widow who has desired your return so

keenly, who has spoken of you to Adolphine every day?"

"What, madame, can it be possible that you have thought of me?"

"You ask me? you doubt it? Have you entirely forgotten me?"

"Have I forgotten you? Ah, it would be impossible for me to do that. Your charming features are graven in my heart, in my soul. While far from you I never ceased to see you. Ah, Fanny, when one has once loved you, but forgive me, madame, I lost myself, I called you Fanny as formerly."

"That does not vex me at all; on the contrary, it gives me pleasure. But see what eyes M. Batonnin is making as he looks at us. One would say that he wanted to throw his eyes at our heads. Heavens, how funny he looks. Ha! ha! ha! it makes one shriek with laughter."

"Madame Monleard is very gay this evening," said M. Clairval, looking at M. Batonnin, who answered,—

"I have noticed she is very much gayer since she is a widow."

"This M. Batonnin, with his honeyed expression, always has something ill-natured to say," murmured Madame de Mirallon.

"And he smears it over with honey so as to get it swallowed."

"That's his way."

Adolphine had mechanically approached the piano. She suffered and would have liked to leave the drawing-room, but she dared not, because it would have made her father uneasy. To crown her trouble, M. Batonnin came to talk with her.

"Mademoiselle, shall we have the pleasure of hearing you sing?"

"No, monsieur, it would be impossible for me to do so, for my throat is sore."

"I hope, mademoiselle, that you no longer bear a grudge against me for having said that I thought you looked ill."

"Not at all, monsieur, and besides I think you have divined rightly, for I do not feel well this evening."

"On the other hand, your sister must feel well, for she is as cheerful as possible. She is having quite a conversation with that gentleman. Is he not the one who was at your house one morning, when I came in with your father?"

"Yes, monsieur, that was he."

"Then he was very sad, but it seems that has gone off. He is laughing very heartily with your sister. Are they well acquainted?"

"Why, of course. M. Gustave is an old friend."

"That's all right. I was saying also, Madame Monleard is on very unceremonious terms with

this young man. He must, at least, be an old acquaintance."

Adolphine, in order that she might not have to listen to M. Batonnin, went and seated herself near the whist players, and pretended to occupy herself with the game; but from the place she had taken she could hear the exclamations and whispers and laughing of her sister, and the evening seemed eternal. At length eleven o'clock struck, Fanny rose and prepared to leave; Gustave looked at her and seemed undecided as to what he ought to do. But the young widow exclaimed,—

"M. Clairval is playing; besides, I don't wish that he should always take the trouble to see me home, and since M. Gustave is here, I hope that he will be willing to serve as my squire as far as my door."

Gustave's face brightened; he hastened to declare that he should be delighted to give her his arm, and Fanny immediately said good-evening to her father and sister. For his part, the young man approached Adolphine and whispered to her,—

"Dear little sister, you see me quite happy. She permits me to go home with her, and has even made me understand that she repents that she formerly refused her hand to me. She is touched by my constancy."

"That is well, be happy. It is my dearest wish for you, and, above all, go to my sister's

house; for, believe me, it will be much better to do so than to come to pay court to her here."

Gustave was about to reply, but Fanny called him and led him away. Then Adolphine retired to her room, saying to herself, as she went—

"Such evenings as these are too cruel. I should not have the courage to bear them often."

Gustave did not fail to profit by the permission which Fanny had given him. Two days after the evening upon which he had met her, he went to the young widow's.

"I thought," said she, "that you must already have started off on your travels, and that we should not see you again for six months."

"Oh, I have no further desire to travel. I shall do very well in Paris now; above all, if you will allow me to come and see you."

"Of what use is it for me to permit you, since you do not come? I expected you the day before yesterday, I expected you yesterday."

"I feared lest I should be indiscreet in profiting too quickly by the permission which you accorded me."

"I thought that you had agreed to dispense with ceremony, and that we were exactly on the same terms as before my marriage with M. Monleard."

These words were accompanied by so sweet a look, that Gustave could not doubt but that she loved him. He took one of Fanny's hands and

covered it with kisses. The young woman allowed him to do so, and her hand softly returned the pressure of his own. Another man but Gustave would perhaps have carried his desires and attempts further, but he had so long accustomed himself to look upon Fanny as the one whom he wished to make his wife, and there was so much respect in his love, which the widow's costume increased rather than diminished.

Gustave confined himself therefore to repeating that he had never ceased to love her whom he had hoped to call his wife, and that he should be very happy, if he could at last feel his desires realized. And Fanny made him understand that she had been volatile and ambitious, but that he must put that down to her youth and heedlessness, and that in the depths of her heart her love had not been in accord with her vanity. Then as she chatted, the young widow adroitly led Gustave to speak of his new position. The latter had ten thousand francs salary while he remained in his uncle's house. He expected to have more in the future. It is true that M. Grandcourt would not be pleased at his nephew's marrying; however, he would not put the slightest obstacle to the execution of this plan. They would not live in the banker's house, but would take a pretty apartment further from the offices. They would not have a carriage, but he would often take his wife to the theatre and to the

country. He could not give her diamonds, but she would have pretty gowns, and as she was already charming of herself, she would be still more beautiful even without being covered with diamonds.

In thus conversing, in forming the sweetest projects for the future, the hours passed very quickly when Gustave was with Fanny. Having the facility of seeing the woman he loved at her own house, he went far less often to M. Gerbault's. As for Adolphine, she no longer went to her sister's at all; for she knew that she should meet Gustave there, and she wished as far as was possible to avoid seeing him.

Two months had passed thus, during which Cherami had seen very little of Gustave, who spent with Fanny all the time he could steal from his employment at his uncle's. At length one morning, as our lover was hastening to his sweetheart, Cherami seized him on the way and stopped him.

"By all the powers! my dear Gustave, is there no way of having a chat with you? Have you nothing further to say to your friend? or am I no longer your friend? One would say that you were avoiding me."

"No, my dear Arthur, far from it. I always have the greatest pleasure in seeing you. But you must know that I am in love, more in love than ever, and that I pass with Fanny all the time I can spare from my occupation."

"Well, how is your love affair going, confound it! Are you content? Are things going as you wish this time? Tell me that at least."

"My dear fellow, I am the happiest of men. Fanny loves me, I cannot doubt it this time. As soon as her period of mourning is over, we shall marry. We have already made our plans and projects for the future; next month, as ten months have almost gone by, we shall busy ourselves in looking for an apartment that I shall have arranged and decorated beforehand. I want Fanny to think everything delightful."

"Come, I see things are going all right. The little woman is certainly in love with you this time, and you are very much so with her. And her sister, that good Adolphine, do you see her still?"

"I have seen very little of her for some time past, she never comes to her sister's, which rather surprises me. Twice I have wanted to talk with Adolphine, to inform her that my marriage with Fanny was decided, but I could not find her, she was out; for I cannot suppose she would have refused to see me—her brother."

"With all this you have not thought of a place for me?"

"Excuse me, I have spoken to my uncle. He did not look as if he believed that you were seriously in search of employment."

"By Jove, if it's necessary that your uncle

should have anything to do with it, I am quite sure that I shall never get a place."

"Don't be uneasy, I will look out for you, but there is no hurry. Are you in need of money? Speak!"

"Why, no, I have no need of money. Do you suppose I have already spent the thousand francs you advanced me?"

"But it is more than two months since then, and—"

"Yes, formerly, I should have spent it in a week, I should have made only eight mouthfuls of it. To-day it is no longer so. I told you that I had begun to reform. I have discovered just at the entrance of the Boulevard du Temple, a cook shop where they serve dinner. Upon my honor, it's perfect. You don't have a great variety of dishes, it is true, but everything is good. The roast beef is excellent, one might imagine he was in London; and for eighteen sous, a person may dine very comfortably. I used to give more than that to the waiter, when I dined elsewhere."

"My dear fellow, you must not exaggerate things. It seems to me you are pushing your reform too far."

"I think it is fine. I believe I shall end by living on my five hundred and fifty francs income, and when I do I want to march between two clarinets, and let myself be seen."

"After my marriage, I will find you some suitable employment."

"Get married at once then, that I may have my hare. I feel I may hope it will not take place without my being forewarned of it. I don't ask to be at the wedding, that would be indiscreet; but I should like, at least, to greet the newly-married pair as they leave the church."

"And I should like you to be present at the festivities. We shall not give a ball, her widowhood is too recent; but we shall have a fine repast, and on that day, at least, I hope you will forget your reform. But good-by, I am late, she will be expecting me. You will hear from me soon."

Gustave departed, and Cherami said to himself,—

"Brave fellow, he well deserves to be happy; but will he be so with his Fanny? Hum, I don't know so much about that; for myself, I should have preferred the other, but then he's in love with the former. She is very pretty, it is true; but I am an old fox and I don't put any faith in her. Why, confound it! whom do I see over there? My two little pearls, Laurette and Lucie, and I have money in my pocket. Oh, well, no, by Saint Anthony, I won't yield to temptation. Let's get away before they see me."

It really was Laurette and Lucie, both very coquettishly attired, and looking very nice, who

were coming along towards Cherami; but the latter, heaving a profound sigh, set off with such haste that he threw himself against the door of an omnibus which had stopped for a lady, and pushed by the conductor, decided to get into it also.

CHAPTER VI

Italy Again. Women are Often Variable

Some weeks rolled by again, and on a certain Thursday, Fanny, who had not been to her father's for rather a long time, said to Gustave when she saw him during the day,—

"My dear, I must go to dinner at my father's to-day, but I hope you will join us in the evening."

"Since you are going, you may be sure I will be there, too. Oh, I saw that there was an apartment to let in a pretty house in the Rue Fontaine. Do you like that neighborhood well enough to live in it?"

"I like it very much."

"Well, I'll go and look at the apartment presently, and if it seems suitable, I will tell you this evening, that you also may see it. For ten months have now elapsed, and the time is not far distant when I may call you my wife; it is, therefore, not too soon for me to begin to make the necessary arrangements for our establishment."

"Do so, my dear," answered Fanny, "you can tell me this evening whether you think the apartment will suit us."

Towards five o'clock, the young widow reached her father's. M. Gerbault always welcomed his daughter kindly. Adolphine tried to smile at her sister.

"You are going to marry M. Gustave this time?" said M. Gerbault to Fanny.

"Why not, father? Do you think I should be wrong in doing so?"

"No—only I regret that you did not marry him a year ago."

"Why, father, it seems to me I acted wisely. Gustave had only a very moderate salary. M. Monleard offered me a fortune, I could not hesitate; things have not turned out as I hoped, but surely no one could have foreseen that."

"But you are very fortunate to meet again with a man who loves you still after you have treated him with disdain."

"Good heavens, father, if Gustave had ceased to love me, some one else would have offered, that is all."

"That is possible, I see that you have an answer for everything."

Adolphine listened to her sister in surprise, but she did not allow herself to make a single reflection, and kept to herself the thoughts which Fanny's speech evoked in her mind. But she avoided as far as possible talking with her of her approaching marriage to Gustave.

Evening brought to M. Gerbault's his faith-

ful whist players, and, later, Gustave, who shook hands with the man he looked upon as already his father-in-law, and going up to Adolphine, would have taken hers in friendly fashion, but she, by an involuntary movement, drew them away. Then she immediately forced herself to smile, and herself offered her hand to Gustave, saying,—

"Oh, excuse me, I took you for M. de Raincy."

"And she absolutely refuses to give her hand to him," said Fanny, laughing, "although he offered her his in exchange. Don't you think Gustave, she was very wrong to refuse that young man?"

"How so, if she did not love him?"

"As if anyone ever married for love."

Perceiving that she had said something which might offend Gustave, the young woman hastily resumed,—

"When one is a young lady, one must be reasonable. When one is a widow, that is different. One has the right, then, to follow the instincts of her heart."

These words quickly dispelled the frown that was gathering on Gustave's brow. In a few moments came M. Batonnin, who, after bowing to all the company, said with a radiant air,—

"I have just met some one whom you will probably see later on. For when I said to him, 'I am going to M. Gerbault's to pass the evening,'

he exclaimed, 'I should like to go there also, if it were but for a moment.'"

"Who was this person?" demanded M. Gerbault.

"Some one who is very amiable, who comes from Italy. What! can't you guess? M. le Comte de la Berinière."

"The dear comte, why, has he returned?"

"Yesterday only. He immediately inquired about everybody. When I told him that Madame Monleard was a widow, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. He had not dreamt of it."

"Good heavens, how stupid this man is," muttered Gustave, looking at Fanny.

Since hearing of the return of the Comte de la Berinière, the latter seemed disturbed, and a prey to a kind of preoccupation. After some moments, and to get a little air, she left the place she was occupying between her sister and Gustave, and went for a moment to a window, then, instead of returning to her seat, she went and took one near the whist players.

Adolphine had followed her sister with her eyes, and had not lost one of her movements. As for Gustave, when he saw Fanny seat herself at a distance, he drew nearer to Adolphine, and said to her,—

"Your sister wishes, I see, that I should tell you about our charming plans for the future; for some time past, Adolphine, I have not been

able to talk with you. I have called several times, but have not seen you."

"Yes, I know it."

"I thought you were not indifferent to that which concerned me, that you sympathized with my happiness. You have seen me so unhappy, that I am sure that you desire to see me otherwise now."

"Yes, of course, I wish it. A love like yours well deserves to be returned."

Gustave then enumerated to Adolphine all the plans that he had formed for the future, when he should be her brother-in-law. Adolphine only half listened to him; she seemed to be more attentively occupied in watching her sister, who pretended to take a great deal of interest in the whist; but the arrival of the Comte de la Berinière presently caused a general movement. Each one paid his compliment to the traveller, and congratulated him on the fortunate influence which the climate of Italy seemed to have had on his health.

"Yes, I am very well," said the comte, who, after bowing rather coldly to Adolphine, hastened to approach her sister. "Italy is a very beautiful country, but for all that, it does not equal France, and especially Paris. Really, there is nothing there that is superior to our Parisian women, and what I look for first in a country, is its women."

"However, you remained absent for rather a long period, M. le Comte," said the young widow, making a sign to M. de la Berinière, to seat himself beside her, and this sign was accompanied by a most charming smile.

The comte hastened to place himself beside Fanny, and said to her, but almost in a whisper,—

"In fact, I have been gone for more than a year, and during that time many events have transpired, which no one could have foreseen. Allow me to offer my condolences on your widowhood."

"Yes, I am a widow. I have gained my freedom. Ten months have elapsed since that event. You must think me very much changed. I am thinner, older, and then this dress is so gloomy."

"That is to say, you are always ravishing, and if that were possible, I should say that you are still prettier than you used to be. As to the dress, what does that matter? You embellish anything that you wear."

"Ah, M. le Comte, you flatter me. You don't think all that you say."

"Me? I think it and I feel it. You are an enchantress."

"In Italy you must have seen many pretty women."

"Yes, there are a good many of them there, but I repeat they do not approach the Parisians in general, and you in particular."

"Oh, do be quiet. Are you no longer in love with my sister?"

"With your sister? By Jove, no. She refused my hand; I don't bear her any grudge for it—but—frankly speaking, I am very glad of it now."

"Why is that?"

"Ah, I cannot tell you that here."

"Well, will you come and tell me at my house, then?"

"You will permit me, then, to go there and pay my court to you?"

"I will do more than that, I shall count upon your doing so."

"You are adorable."

Gustave thought that the comte's conversation was unduly prolonged. He could not see at all the little coquettish grimaces with which the widow accompanied her speech, because the latter was careful to turn her chair so as not to face him. But it seemed singular to him that Fanny could remain so long away from him without desiring that he should join her. The young man walked about the drawing-room, looked at the young woman, and sometimes paused near her, but she did not seem to pay any attention to him. Unable longer to master his impatience, Gustave decided to interrupt the conversation between the comte and Fanny by saying aloud to the latter,—

"I went to see the apartment in the Rue Fontaine; you know, the one I told you about this morning."

The widow was visibly vexed; however, she answered, looking surprised,—

"What do you mean, what apartment? Oh, yes, yes, I know what you were going to say."

"Well, the apartment was very pretty, very well laid out. I think it will quite please you, but you must see it at once, for it is probable it will be quickly let."

"Very well, very well, I will go and see it. Oh, M. de la Berinière, you have been to Naples, did you see Vesuvius throw out flames? That is a thing that I am very curious to see. Tell me what a volcano looks like."

Gustave went off, hardly satisfied. He thought his future wife took too much interest in Italy. He came back quite pensively to seat himself beside Adolphine. The latter said nothing to him, but she looked at him and read his thoughts.

Monsieur Gerbault came at length to talk with the comte. Gustave then turned towards Fanny and said to her,—

"Shall we go? You said that you wanted to get home early?"

But the little widow, who did not want the comte to see her leave with Gustave, answered,—

"It is too early. It will vex my father if I leave so soon."

"But you said—"

"Good heavens, you're in a great hurry to go."

Gustave bit his lips and said no more. M. Batonnin approached him smiling.

"You are doing nothing, M. Gustave, you are not playing?"

"I don't like cards, monsieur."

"You prefer to talk with the ladies. I can understand that. You have travelled also, and the ladies are very fond of hearing travellers' tales. Have you seen any volcanoes?"

"No, monsieur."

And Gustave turned his back on Batonnin, who smiled at himself as he looked into a mirror. Presently the comte took his hat, and was about to depart discreetly without saying anything, as is the custom in society, but Fanny, who had followed him with her eyes, managed to put herself in his way and to say to him in a low tone,—

"I shall expect you to-morrow, M. de la Berinière."

He answered by a gracious inclination and disappeared. After a few moments Fanny said to Gustave,—

"Well, monsieur, I am at your orders, since you want to go."

"It is I who am at your orders, madame."

"Let us go."

This time Adolphine came up to Gustave and

pressed his hand very affectionately. On the way the young man said to Fanny,—

"You were greatly interested in M. de la Berinière's conversation. You talked with nobody but him; you left us, your sister and I, and didn't trouble yourself further about us."

"I certainly took pleasure in listening to what this gentleman told me about Italy. He is very pleasant and very agreeable to listen to. I did not think that you would see any harm in that."

"I don't see the slightest harm in that conversation, only I am very much bored when you are so long with another, and I regret it is not the same with you."

"Oh, how childish, as if I were not still there. Oh, what a headache I have. I shall have a sick headache to-morrow, I am sure of it."

"You will go and look at this apartment?"

"If I don't have a sick headache, I will; for if I have one I certainly shan't stir out of my bed."

When they reached Fanny's, the betrothed couple parted much more coldly than was their custom. The next day, the young widow gave this order to her servant,—

"If M. le Comte de la Berinière presents himself, you will immediately show him in to me, If M. Gustave comes, you will tell him that I have a sick headache, that I am asleep, and under no pretext will you allow him to come in. Do you understand?"

"Yes, madame."

The young woman took the greatest care to dress her hair becomingly and adorn herself. This care extended over her whole toilet. Nothing was forgotten that would tend to captivate, dazzle and seduce.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, M. de la Berinière was shown into the pretty widow's boudoir, where she was awaiting him, seated gracefully on the sofa, and she signed to him to seat himself beside her.

"You see, fair lady, I have profited by your permission," said the comte, gallantly kissing Fanny's little hand.

"It was, perhaps, rather indiscreet in me to tell you that I should expect you, but I wished to talk with you and one can hardly talk in company."

"You have conferred the greatest happiness upon me, a tête-à-tête with you, a favor which is exceedingly precious to me. It is true that in society it is difficult to say all that one thinks, and yesterday evening at your father's, there was a young man who seemed very restless because of your conversation."

"Ah, Gustave,—he is a friend of my infancy."

"A friend of your infancy? Is he not still more?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, charming widow, I will explain myself

without any reserve. Yesterday on informing me of your widowhood, M. Batonnin told me also that you were soon going to marry again."

"Good heavens, what a gossip M. Batonnin is. What will he not meddle with?"

"Possibly he is a gossip; but come, tell me, was he speaking the truth? Are you going to marry this M. Gustave, the friend of your infancy?"

"There has been some question of marriage between us, yes, that is true; but to really marry him—that is still very far off."

"Really, you are not irrevocably engaged?"

"Me? not at all."

"But that apartment he was talking to you about yesterday, begging you to go and see it."

"Oh, well, that is an apartment that he wanted to take for himself. He wanted to have my opinion upon the way in which it was laid out, because a woman understands that better than a man, that is all. But now I must question you in my turn, monsieur. Why are you so anxious to know if my hand is at my disposal?"

"Why, charming woman? Can you not divine my reason? Do you not remember what I said one day at your house in the early days of your marriage? 'Monleard was cleverer than I, he outdistanced me, for but for him I should have asked you to become the Comtesse de la Berinière!' Well, what I could not then do, I should

be very happy to do to-day; and this time you see, I have not allowed another to anticipate me, but came immediately to the point. And if you are not engaged, I offer you my name and my fortune; I will make a charming comtesse of you."

"Oh, M. le Comte, ought I to believe you? Is what you have been saying to me quite real? I am certainly not engaged at all, but my sister —you loved her."

"I thought but for a moment of your sister, only that I might enter your family. In accepting me you cannot fear to cause her any grief, since she refused me."

"That is true, little idiot. I should not have refused you."

"Well, then, you will accept me now. You will consent to be my comtesse. Place your hand in mine as a sign of acquiescence."

Fanny made a little grimace of embarrassment, closed her eyes, but she gave her hand to the comte, who threw himself on his knees beside her, exclaiming,—

"I am the happiest of men."

While this conversation was taking place, Gustave had presented himself at Fanny's door. But the servant had said to him,—

"It is impossible, monsieur, that you should see madame, who has a sick headache. She is asleep, and she gave strict orders not to be awakened."

"What! does this order concern me also?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, you cannot come in to madame. Her headache is very bad indeed."

Gustave went back to his office in a very bad humor. He was astonished that Fanny should refuse to see him, because of a mere headache. He said to himself that if he were ill, the presence of her whom he loved might do him good and cure him a great deal more quickly. Then, in spite of himself, he recalled Fanny's conduct the evening before at her father's, the pleasure that she seemed to take in talking with M. de la Berinière, while she listened to what he was saying. All this saddened him and made him uneasy. He could not be jealous of the comte, who was sixty, but he was displeased with Fanny; and while seeking to excuse her by saying to himself that it was not forbidden for a young woman to be a little coquettish, to love to shine in society, he feared that she did not know how to love as he did.

People talk about presentiments, but oftener than not, these presentiments are but the reunion of our memories which, under a new aspect, shed a clear light upon our mind and destroy the illusions which have deceived our hearts. With this new light, we can foresee the betrayals which await us, and we say to ourselves, "I had a presentiment about it."

Gustave returned to Fanny's in the evening.

It was quite natural for him to try to learn whether her headache had left her. The servant informed him that madame was out.

"Gone out!" said Gustave. "She must be better then."

"Mercy! yes, monsieur. It's easy to be seen that madame got rid of her headache."

"And where has she gone?"

"I know nothing about it, monsieur."

"What! she told you nothing to tell me if I came?"

"Nothing at all."

"Is she at her father's?"

"I don't know, monsieur."

"Very well, I'll come back again. Beg her to wait up for me when she returns."

The young man hastily ran to M. Gerbault's. He found Adolphine alone. The latter saw immediately by his features, that he was in some trouble. She took his hand and said to him,—

"What has happened my friend? There is something the matter with you,"

"There is. Have you seen your sister to-day?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"No, she has not been here at all. Why do you ask me?"

"Because I haven't seen her either to-day. This morning I went to her house, and they told me that she had a headache and she was sleep-

ing. But this evening I went there and she had gone out."

"Oh, well, she has gone to see some of her friends. She has kept up many of the acquaintances she made when her husband was alive. She goes to see them sometimes. I see nothing in that to make you uneasy."

"But after a whole day, during which we had not met, to go out without saying where she was going—and without leaving a word for me."

"Fanny is so heedless, she must have forgotten."

"Kind Adolphine, you try to excuse your sister, but in the depths of your heart, I am sure that you blame her. Yesterday evening do you remember that she was rather unamiable to me?"

"Why, I hadn't noticed it."

"Yes, yes, you must have seen very well that she left us to go and talk with that M. de la Berinière. Who is that man? Where did she first know him?"

"He was a friend of her husband, and then he was intimate with my father."

"Is he rich?"

"He has forty thousand francs income."

"Is he married?"

"No, he is a bachelor. He asked my hand of my father."

"And you refused him?"

"Yes."

"You thought him too old, didn't you?"

"It wasn't for that—but—I refused him."

"Well, Adolphine, I don't know what is passing in Fanny's mind—but all this is not natural. At the point we have reached, we are to be married in six weeks—we are both of us free—people should not pass an entire day without at least glancing at each other and shaking hands. There is something in it. Is she going to throw me over again? But no, it isn't possible; that would be too shocking, altogether unworthy. No, I am ashamed of having had such a thought. No doubt she has reached home by this time, and is expecting me. Au revoir, little sister!"

"Gustave, if anything should happen—you will let me know as quickly as possible, won't you?"

But Gustave was not listening, he was already at the foot of the staircase. He ran to Fanny's. She had not got in. He remembered the apartment which he had asked her to go and see, and although it was hardly customary to go and see apartments in the evening, he said to himself,—

"Perhaps she is there," and in a few minutes he had traversed the distance which separated him from the Rue Fontaine. He inquired of the porter if he had shown the apartment, and the latter answered that no one had appeared there during the day to see the apartment that was to let. This was another hope withered,

and since Fanny had gone out, why had she not been to see this apartment which he had praised to her the evening before, telling her that it was necessary to go at once, for fear it should be let to some one else.

Gustave said all this to himself, as he returned to Madame Monleard's dwelling. She had not yet come home, but it was only nine o'clock. She must soon return, and Gustave would not go to bed without seeing her and speaking to her, even though he should have to pass the half of the night in playing sentry before her door. But a woman could not return late unaccompanied; she could not have gone to a ball, nor does a lady go to the theatre alone, either. She had perhaps gone to a party. Some one would bring her home, perhaps, and he must know who that some one was.

How many thoughts pass in the space of a few seconds through the mind of a man who is in love, anxious, jealous! Imagination is so rapid, knows not where to stop, nor where to stay. Every minute that passed without Fanny's appearance increased the anxiety, the uneasiness, the suspicions of Gustave. Finally, about half past ten a cab stopped in front of the young widow's dwelling. Gustave ran and reached the door before the cabby had time to get down from the box. Fanny was in the cab, but she was alone. When she recognized Gustave as he opened the

door for her, she began to laugh and exclaimed, mischievously,—

"Why, are you opening cabs now? Ha! ha! I compliment you on your new profession."

This fit of merriment seemed rather out of place to Gustave, who answered,—

"It was highly necessary that I should watch the cab, since I did not find you at home, and you had gone without leaving me even a word that I might know where you were."

"Oh, good heavens! what a great crime! Am I no longer free to go where I think fit, without asking your permission? A pretty thing, indeed!"

"Fanny, you know very well, that is not what I meant to say. You are well aware that you are quite free to do all that you wish. Do not equivocate. At the point we have reached, it is natural enough that we should tell each other what we are going to do, that we should have no secrets the one from the other. This morning I came to your house, and you would not receive me because of your headache."

"Well, monsieur, is it no longer permissible to have a headache? Why don't you pay the cabman? One fare, for I came from Madame Delabert's, that is all. May I not visit my friends."

"Come, Fanny, don't be angry, perhaps I was wrong to be so uneasy, but it would have been so easy for you to have left a word for me. Remember too, that I have not seen you to-day, and a

whole day without seeing you is quite long now."

"It was not my fault that I had the headache. I feel a little of it still, so I shall go to bed, for I am very tired."

"Can't I go up for a moment with you?"

"Oh, the idea! so late. It would be very unconventional."

"It's not eleven o'clock."

"But I tell you again, that I still feel my headache, and that I am going to bed immediately,"

"Why, then, did you not go to see the apartment of which I was speaking to you, the Rue Fontaine, near the Place Saint-Georges?"

"I did not go because I forgot all about it."

"How could you forget so important a thing, for if this apartment suits us, we must take it immediately."

"My dear, I don't want to stand any longer in the street. What does it look like, standing in front of a door?"

"Then let me come up for a minute."

"No, I tell you that I want to go to bed."

"Fanny, there is something the matter with you. All this is not natural. You are not at all the same to me as you were two days ago."

"You can tell me all that to-morrow; good night."

"Very well, till to-morrow then, madame. I hope that you will be visible at least."

"Why, good heavens, monsieur, I am always visible when I am not ill. Don't come too early, however, for I don't rise with the dawn."

Fanny had knocked, the entrance door opened. She hastily went in and shut the door on Gustave, who still remained there.

The poor lover could not resolve to depart from Fanny's dwelling. He did not know what to think. He asked himself if he had been wrong in reproaching Fanny. She had been to see one of her friends, and had returned alone. He could not see any great harm in all that. However, he suffered, was uneasy; his heart told him that there was something the matter, and that she he loved was no longer the same to him.

Finally, after walking up and down for an hour in front of Fanny's house, and looking at her windows, which were lighted, when this light was extinguished, he decided to go, saying to himself,—

"I wish that the morrow were here."

Gustave did not close an eye that night. In his situation, what lover could have slept? Only one who was not in love. At eight o'clock in the morning the young man went down into the offices, where none of the clerks had as yet arrived. His uncle, always an early riser, was there, however, and said to him,—

"What the devil makes you so early. Was it love of work that called you up?"

"Yes, uncle, I have some accounts to examine."

"How pale you are, and worn! One would think you had passed the night—"

"I have just got up."

"I'll wager that you haven't slept. Something new in your love affairs, eh?"

"Why—no, uncle."

"Your dear Fanny hasn't been playing you some new trick?"

"Oh, uncle, at the point which we have reached—"

"It would not astonish me at all."

"You have a very bad opinion of her."

"When a woman has jilted a man once, she will jilt him again—she will jilt him again. For the matter of that, it is much better that she should deceive him before the marriage than after. Come and have some breakfast with me."

"It's too early, uncle, I'm not hungry. Oh, by the way, have you thought of Arthur?"

"And who is Arthur, pray?"

"An honest fellow who is looking for a place."

"Oh, that ungainly fellow, who looks like a worthless sort of chap, always ready to fly off at a tangent. Really, you are not fortunate in your choice of friends. What sort of a place do you want me to give this gentleman? He does not inspire me with the slightest confidence.

He was rich, and has spent all his money; a fine recommendation."

"I think you misjudge him. One may have faults and correct them. Repentance avails nothing with you, uncle."

"Repentance has one great defect in my eyes, and that is that it never comes until the fault has been committed. If one could repent before doing wrong, that is to say pause before falling, then I should esteem repentance a great deal more highly. Well, where are you going to now? Are you leaving the office already?"

Gustave could not stay in one place. He went out and hurriedly walked as far as Fanny's house. There he stopped and looked at his watch; it was barely nine o'clock, and therefore impossible for him to present himself at her door. The young man went up the Faubourg Poissonnière; he walked on, he passed the barrier. Little mattered it to him where he went, provided the time passed. Suddenly he bumped himself against a tree, so lost in reflection that he had failed to see it. Then he stopped and looked around him, and saw with astonishment that he was in the open country. He felt that the air was keener and purer. It refreshed his spirit, and calmed the beating of his heart. He seated himself at the foot of the tree; there he breathed more freely, he felt better. What a skilled

physician is the air, and how many fine cures we owe to it.

Gustave remained for a long time seated at the foot of the tree, which was almost bare of leaves, for it was the end of October. He reviewed in his memory all Fanny's conduct during the past two days, and said to himself, "Is my uncle right?" Finally he rose and returned to Paris. It was eleven o'clock when he found himself again at the young widow's door, but he was not obliged to wait this time. He rang the bell violently, and the servant showed him in to her mistress.

CHAPTER VII

A Second Time. A Gentleman in Bed

The gentle Fanny was seated beside the fire arrayed in a very pretty morning gown, for she was a woman whom no one ever surprised in négligé; upon this occasion her face, instead of being lively, wore a cold, restrained expression, like one who had taken a resolution and was prepared to carry it out.

"I have come rather early, perhaps," said Gustave, seating himself, and trying in vain to discover an amiable smile on the features of the young widow; "but you must forgive my impatience, I was in such a hurry to see you again. Yesterday I could hardly speak to you, and I had such a host of things I wanted to say to you."

"And I wish to speak to you, monsieur," answered Fanny rather coldly, "I also have several things to tell you."

"Monsieur? What! you call me monsieur now," said Gustave in dismay. "Why, Fanny what does that mean?"

"Please do not take up my words so. That I call you monsieur now is the result of the reflections I have been making since yesterday. It is better for you to know that I do not care

to be followed about, spied upon; that a jealous man is insupportable to me."

"Oh, you are seeking a quarrel with me, madame."

"No, I am not seeking a quarrel with you; but I will tell you frankly the subject of my reflections, and the result of these reflections is—"

"Is what? Come, finish, madame."

"Is that I fear that I cannot make you happy, Gustave. My disposition is light, heedless, but I cannot change it, and it does not accord at all with yours. In consequence, we should do much better not to marry. Oh, it is entirely in the interests of your happiness that I have come to this resolution."

Gustave rose so suddenly that the little widow could not restrain a movement of fear. He placed himself in front of her, crossing his arms, and looking fixedly at her as he said,—

"This is what you were seeking was it;—a rupture? And you dare to accuse me of espionage, to try to put me in the wrong, to accuse me when my conduct has only been the consequence of your own? Ah, don't think you can treat me thus again. You are led by another motive. You have formed other plans."

"Monsieur, that does not concern you. It seems to me that I am quite free to do as I please. I hope that you will dispense with your reproaches, for, between well-bred people they are out of

place, and no one quarrels on an occasion like this."

"Be easy, madame, I will not forget that you are a woman. But for you to play thus with me is unworthy of you. Fanny, is it really true? Have I quite understood you? It is but two days since you were with me forming plans for our future. Your hand was pressing mine, you were asking if I should always love you."

"Justine, bring me a log of wood, my fire is going out."

The tone in which the young woman called her servant without listening to Gustave, finished the exasperation of the latter. He took several turns up and down the room, and came back towards Fanny as if to give free vent to his anger. But he stopped, cast on her a look which showed all his indignation, then abruptly left the room without looking back.

For some hours Gustave was almost insane. So little had he expected this new blow, that he could hardly believe in its reality. He went home and shut himself up there, fearing to meet his uncle, who would say to him, "I predicted to you what would happen." He preferred to be alone and for some moments he could not keep from shedding tears over his lost happiness, even while he said to himself that Fanny did not deserve the tears that she had caused to flow. Then he racked his brain

in the effort to imagine what could have caused this sudden change in the young widow's ideas.

Gustave formed the plan of leaving Paris again, of starting without saying anything to anybody, but the next day he ran to Adolphine's to tell her of his new trouble.

Fanny's sister seemed to be expecting Gustave's visit. She held out her hand to him as soon as she saw him, and said to him,—

"Poor Gustave, I know all. My sister is again causing you sorrow. Her conduct is shocking."

"What! you know already that she no longer wishes to marry me? Who told you of it?"

"Why, she herself yesterday; during the day she came to tell us that directly her period of mourning was finished she was going to marry."

"She was going to marry?"

"What! you don't know it then?"

"Finish, please. She is going to marry—"

"The Comte de la Berinière."

Gustave fell into a chair, murmuring, "The Comte de la Berinière."

However, there was more surprise than anger in his voice, for on learning that she had preferred to him a man who was over sixty years of age, he understood that it was not a new love that had changed Fanny's heart, and he presently exclaimed,—

"Oh, so it is interest again that inspires this

woman. She has preferred a fortune and a title to me. For this man is rich, is he not?"

"Yes, very rich. And, should she become a widow again, Fanny does not wish to find herself left poorly off for the second time. If she marries the comte he will assure her twenty thousand francs income; but you must not think, my friend, that we approve her conduct. When she came here to tell us of her new resolution, my father told her that the manner in which she was treating you was disgraceful, and that comtesse or no comtesse, he did not wish to see her again."

"And what did she reply to that?"

"She said that she did not understand how anyone could blame her conduct, and she left repeating that nobody cared anything about her happiness. It seems that the comte had paid his court to her formerly, and had declared that he greatly regretted that she had married Auguste. That is why when he saw her again—"

"Enough, my dear Adolphine. I need know nothing further. I was wrong to believe myself loved. Can one ever be loved? No, there are some beings who are born to love alone without ever meeting a heart which understands them."

"Gustave, why do you say that to me?"

"What does it matter, after all; one cannot change one's destiny. Good-by, my kind Adolphine."

"You are leaving, Gustave? Where are you going?"

"I don't know, but I must go away again. I cannot be here when she marries this comte. I am a fool, of that I am well aware, and your sister does not deserve the slightest regret. But one cannot lose all his illusions and escape with impunity. Good-by, give my respects to your father."

"But you will not be so long absent this time? And on your return you need not be afraid to come to see me; for you will no longer meet her here."

"Yes, you shall see me again, good-by."

Gustave left Adolphine, whose eyes were full of tears as she parted from him, but he did not understand their language. He hastened to inform his uncle of what had transpired, and of his desire to go to England, and to remain there for some time.

Monsieur Grandcourt confined himself to saying,—

"This woman will send you all round the world. Let's hope this will be the last time. Go to England, go wherever you like, but do not come back until you are cured of your foolish passion."

Gustave soon made the preparations for his departure, and he had but a few hours to remain in Paris, when he ran against Cherami.

"Where are we off to now?" cried "handsome

Arthur," taking Gustave's hand. "What has happened to you? Your face is not so gay or so cheerful as it was the last time I saw you. Have new obstacles arisen in your love affair?"

"My dear fellow," answered Gustave, sadly, "everything is quite changed since you last saw me. There is no further idea of marriage or of love. There is new treason on the part of Fanny, which I should have expected; but no, one could not imagine such perfidy in a woman who smiles at one and tells him that she loves him."

"My dear fellow, what are you telling me? The little widow has slipped out of your hand again? Come, it's impossible!"

"It is true. She is going to marry the Comte de la Berinière, an old man, but very rich. She will be a comtesse, and has no further use for me."

"Why this is shocking! to play teetotum like that with a gallant man's heart. And you have not killed your rival?"

"No, that would not make Fanny love me again. But I am going away; I do not wish to be present again as at her first wedding. No, that was quite enough."

"You are leaving Paris, and where are you going?"

"To England; but I shall not be so long absent this time."

"Why, confound it! my dear fellow, don't go; this affair can be arranged perhaps."

"No, no, it is finished, quite finished. Fanny will never be my wife. Good-by, my dear fellow, it is almost time for the train, au revoir."

Gustave had gone. Cherami stunned by this sudden departure, stood for a moment pensive, then striking his trousers with his walking-stick, he exclaimed,—

"Confound it! how unfortunate my friend Gustave is. They have deprived him again of the woman whom he loves—and shall I permit it? I, his Pylades, I to whom he has lent money without stint? No, by all the powers, I will not suffer it! Ah, little widow, you have thrown over a very fine fellow. Do you think you can make game of everybody like that? But patience, I am here and I have caught my hare."

The next day towards noon, Cherami went and walked up and down in front of Madame Monleard's house, for he said to himself,—

"I don't know where this Comte de la Berinière, of whom Gustave spoke to me yesterday, roosts; but by watching in front of this house I cannot fail to learn. This comte must come to pay his court to the little woman he wants to marry; he is rich, he will come in a carriage, and I shall be very awkward indeed, if I can't get his address from his servant."

Everything happened, in fact, as Cherami had

foreseen. At one o'clock, an elegant coupé stopped in front of the house where Fanny lived. A gentleman, who was no longer young, alighted from it. This gentleman, despite his age, was dressed in the latest fashion, and shed around him a very strong odor of perfume.

"This is my man," said Cherami to himself, and allowing the comte time to go into the house, he approached the footman who was leaning against a post, and said to him,—

"Was not that M. le Comte de la Berinière whom I just saw alighting from this carriage?"

"Yes, monsieur, it was."

"Ah, I said to myself, 'Why, here is an old acquaintance.' However, fearing I might be mistaken, I did not wish to accost him; but I will go to-morrow morning to renew my acquaintance with him. Where does the dear comte live now?"

"In the Rue de la Ville-l'Eveque, just at the entrance, by the Madeleine."

"Very well, I can see that from here. Up to what time shall I find the comte in the morning?"

"Monsieur rises late, he hardly ever goes out before midday."

"Infinitely obliged, I am sure the dear comte will be delighted to see me to-morrow morning."

"If monsieur will give me his name, I will tell my master that he is coming."

"No, devil take it! no, I want to surprise him. On the contrary, say nothing to him."

Cherami departed and went back to the hôtel Bel-Air, saying to himself,—

"Gustave would not fight a duel with his rival, but I'll wager it was only out of delicacy, a remnant of kindness for that little blockhead of a Fanny. He said to himself, 'Let her be a comtesse, since that will make her happy.' Could anything be more fatuous? But I haven't the slightest reason to be agreeable to this lady. I hope, on the contrary, to prevent her from putting this new affront on my young friend."

The next morning, having made a careful toilet, Cherami took the omnibus for Paris, and another for the Madeleine, and at half past ten he arrived at the Comte de la Berinière's, recognized his footman of the evening before, and said to him,—

"Show me up at once to your master."

"Monsieur le Comte is still in bed."

"Well, wake him up."

"He is awake, for he has already taken his chocolate flavored with vanilla."

"Well, as he is awake, there is no need of his getting up to receive me. I can speak just as well to him in his bed. Go and tell him that one of his old friends desires to see him."

"Your name, monsieur."

"I have already told you that I wish to surprise

him; and, consequently, I do not want to give my name."

The footman went to his master and acquitted himself of his commission. M. de la Berinière was not dreaming of rising as yet. He had taken the young widow to the opera the evening before, and had been gallant in his attentions to her the whole evening; and he was of an age when this kind of thing fatigued him extremely. He was therefore resting in his bed from the fatigues of the evening before.

"This young widow is adorable," he was cogitating to himself, "this marriage will settle me. I shall have to be circumspect, and that will be good for me."

He was therefore rather testy when he heard his servant announce that an old friend wished to speak with him, and he exclaimed,—

"Old friends should no more come in the morning than new ones. Devil take it! can't they let people sleep when they want to. And what name did this extremely early friend give?"

"He would not give his name. He wanted to surprise you, monsieur."

"He deserves that I should decline to see him."

"He was in the street yesterday when you went into Madame Monleard's, monsieur. He recognized you when you were alighting from the carriage."

"Well, let the man come in and surprise me."

The servant introduced Cherami into his master's bedroom and retired. M. de la Berinière, with a silk handkerchief tied over his head, and his eyes still blinking, lying all drawn up in a heap in his bed, and allowing only his nose to appear above the counterpane, was anything but an agreeable object for contemplation. And Cherami, after looking at him for some moments, said to himself,—

"What! is it this old, withered, dried-up fellow that she prefers to my young and pleasing Gustave? Confound it all! women love money a great deal better than we do; for we want money that we may have women, while these women accept money that they may leave us."

While Cherami was making this reflection, the comte, who was looking curiously at his visitor, said to him at length in a rather nasal voice,—

"My dear monsieur, I have thoroughly examined you from head to foot. I have racked my memory, and I cannot remember ever having had a friend whom you resemble in the slightest degree."

Cherami bowed very graciously to the comte, and said,—

"Don't try to remember, M. le Comte, don't give yourself that trouble, it would be useless, for in truth, this is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting you."

"What the devil!—what does this mean?

Then you are not the old friend that was announced to me?"

"It means, M. le Comte, that I permitted myself this slight deception, in order to be sure of seeing you this morning."

Monsieur de la Berinière frowned, made a grimace which did not improve his appearance, looked at Cherami rather suspiciously, and resumed in a dry tone,—

"And what can you have to say to me so urgent, monsieur, that you come and disturb me thus early in the morning, and employ a trick in order to be shown in?"

"You shall know; but first of all allow me to take a seat. The matter is sufficiently important to warrant my talking about it at my ease."

And without awaiting an answer, Cherami took an arm-chair, which he placed opposite the bed and spread himself out in it; his easy manners, which did not lack distinction, began to drive away the evil suspicions which had come for a moment into the comte's mind, and his curiosity was keenly awakened as he looked at this singular person in front of him. The latter, being seated, resumed his speech.

"Monsieur de la Berinière, you see before you Arthur Cherami, an intimate friend of young Gustave Darlemont. I think that you know Gustave Darlemont?"

"By Jove, no. Oh, wait a bit—Gustave?

Can you be speaking of that young man who was the friend of Madame Monleard from infancy, and whom I saw at M. Gerbault's the other evening when I was there?"

"Precisely so; that is to say, I am not aware that Gustave was the friend of Madame Monleard's infancy, but I do know that he became the friend of her heart. In fact, without going further about, he was going to marry the young widow, when your arrival changed the aspect of things. You are a comte, you are rich; the little woman is a coquette of the first order, she turned like a weathercock. For the matter of that, it is not the first time she has turned. King François I has said, 'Woman is often variable, and he is very foolish who trusts her,' which proves that that king had made a special study of the fair sex—a study which had cost him rather dear. But let us get on; you are therefore the cause, M. le Comte, that she, instead of marrying my friend Gustave, suddenly dismissed him; and now do you begin to divine what has brought me here?"

"Why, yes, I think I can guess it; you are sent by this young Gustave, who wishes to fight a duel with me."

"Not altogether as you put it. You are burning, but you are not entirely there. Here it is in a nutshell: Gustave has no thought of fighting a duel—not that he lacks courage,—the young man

has spirit, I would answer for him as for myself; but he has such a weakness for the little widow, that he perhaps fears that if he should kill you he would cause her trouble. The poor fellow is disconsolate, and when he is disconsolate he goes away and seeks distractions in another clime—and what I don't understand is, that he comes back just as much in love as when he went away. For I must tell you, M. le Comte, you are not the first one who has cut the grass from under his feet, as they say; he was about to marry Mademoiselle Fanny Gerbault, when M. Auguste Monleard presented himself. He had a fortune and a brilliant position, and poor Gustave was sent to the right about. To-day it is, therefore, a second representation of the same play, with this variation; that now my young friend has a very fine position in his uncle's banking house, but you have a title, an equipage, and are a great deal richer than he."

"Well, monsieur, since your young friend does not dream of fighting a duel, which for the matter of that is wise enough; for I don't think he would make himself more loved by that means, and, between ourselves, since he has been thrown over once, I am rather astonished that he should come forward a second time."

"I am of your opinion, by all the powers! I should not have acted thus myself. A woman who had jilted me for another—it's a great deal

worse than betrayal. People are deceived and betrayed every day in the week and that may be forgiven; but jilted! — But what can you expect? —passions are passions; we must pity Gustave."

"I pity him with all my heart. But I must again ask you, what brings you to me?"

"Oh, by Jove, that's very simple. I am Gustave's devoted friend. He pardoned an outrage, a betrayal; but I will not allow him to be outraged or betrayed. The ill that is done him wounds and offends me, and as I have never suffered an offence, I shall fight. In consequence, I come to demand satisfaction of you for the little widow's treachery, the treachery of which you are the author. That is to say, to speak more correctly, it is indeed the little widow who is the only one guilty in this affair, it is she who has scorned this poor Gustave in a manner that is altogether indecent; but as there is no way of asking satisfaction of a woman, I come to you to ask it; to you, M. le Comte, as her accomplice and representative in this affair."

The comte thrust his head entirely above the bedclothes in order to better examine the person who made this proposition, and after looking long at Cherami, he answered him with an expression of raillery,—

"My dear monsieur, I have examined you well, and I do not know you at all."

"We can make acquaintance as we fight."

"And why do you want me to fight with you? You have not offended me."

"If it is necessary that I should offend you before you consent to fight with me, be quite easy as to that; I will offend you. However, I confess that I should have preferred the thing to pass off more genteelly, more politely, as is suitable between well-bred people, and although I am not noble as you are, M. le Comte, I beg you to believe that you will not cross swords with a snob. I am of good family, and was well brought up. I inherited a pretty fortune, but I committed follies for that delightful sex which is so inordinately fond of Indian shawls and cashmeres. I ruined myself, or nearly so, but I have not forgotten how to use a sword, and poor Auguste Monleard could have told you something about that."

"What! you fought with the pretty widow's first husband?"

"The next day after his wedding, and I gave him a neat sword stroke in the forearm."

"So that fall he was said to have made on a staircase was—"

"Was the result of our duel."

"Why how is this, monsieur, have you sworn the death of all of the ravishing Fanny's husbands?"

"If she had married my friend Gustave, I assure you that I should not have fought a duel with him."

"Monsieur, allow me to say that your conduct is outside the bounds of common sense."

"And why so, monsieur, if you please?"

"Because no one thus undertakes the cause of another, who is old enough to attend to his own business. Your friend Gustave did not think fit to propose a duel; what could have put it into your head to wish to fight one for him?"

"I explained to you just now the motives for my conduct. If you did not listen to me, I will begin again."

"It is needless, monsieur, I shall not fight with you."

And the comte buried himself under his bedclothes, turned towards the wall, and huddled together in his bed so as to form only a rather voluminous heap. Cherami rose and strolled about the room. Then he warmed his feet at the good fire that was burning on the hearth, and he said,—

"It's rather sharp this morning; you were perfectly right to have ordered a fire to be lit in your room. One gets cold so easily. However, this room is rather close, but a draught of air is easily obtained."

After some minutes, tired of seeing that his visitor still remained, the comte turned round again, and sat up in bed, exclaiming impatiently,—

"Well, monsieur, do you expect to pass your

entire day with me? Do me the pleasure of taking yourself off, and leaving me to sleep."

"And you, M. le Comte, do me the pleasure of retiring under your covering; you will catch cold."

"A truce to pleasantry, monsieur, I have told you I will not fight with you; I repeat it. There is nothing to keep you here longer."

"Oh, my dear M. de la Berinière, for I believe that is really your name, de la Berinière—"

"Yes, monsieur, that is my name."

"My dear Comte de la Berinière, when I have got anything into my head I assure you that it has got to be done. I promised myself that I would fight with you, unless, indeed, you would give me your word of honor to renounce the idea of marrying Auguste Monleard's widow—then I shall be satisfied. Will that suit you?"

"Really, this is too much."

"What is too much?"

"You put me into a perspiration, monsieur."

"I put you into a perspiration? Confound it! you shouldn't complain of that in this weather. Then you will not give her up?"

"For whom do you take me?"

"Then you consent to fight?"

"Go to the devil!"

"Then it is necessary to take stronger measures."

Cherami raised his walking-stick and made it whistle over the comte's head without, however,

touching him. But this movement sufficed to make M. de la Berinière furious and he sat up in bed, exclaiming,—

"Monsieur, you are a rascal."

"Come now, you are waking up at last."

"Monsieur, you will render me satisfaction for this indecent conduct."

"That is what I have been demanding of you for the past hour."

"Leave your address here; to-morrow my seconds will be with you at eight o'clock. Be careful that they find yours there."

"My seconds! what need have we of seconds? Why can't we settle this affair at once between ourselves?" asked Cherami.

"It's easily seen, monsieur, that you have never participated in any duels."

"I bet I have had more than you."

"Then you must know that nobody fights without witnesses; that it is forbidden."

"I know very well that it is the custom to have them, but one does not always conform to custom. M. Monleard and I fought without witnesses."

"As for me, monsieur, as I have no desire because of you to have an ugly affair on my hands, I repeat, I will not fight without witnesses."

"Since you stick to it, we'll have them."

"Let me have your address, monsieur."

"Here it is. Cherami, Rue de l'Orillon, hôtel de Bel-Air at Belleville."

"At Belleville? Ah, you don't live in Paris?"

"I am in the outskirts. Does that vex you?"

"It is exactly the same to me, only my seconds cannot be with you until ten o'clock; for I don't wish to oblige them to get up at daybreak."

"At ten o'clock. I shall expect them. M. le Comte, permit me to wish you a very good morning."

"Good day, monsieur, good day."

Cherami, when in the street again, said,—

"I've caught my hare. He will fight, yes, but with seconds. I must have two. I absolutely must have them, or the duel will not take place. Where can I find them? It's confoundedly embarrassing. I've racked my mind. Hang it! where can I find two witnesses? There is no telling. I must have two, and desirable ones for to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER VIII

A Day with the Rabbits. Madame Capucine's Little Boys

Monsieur Arthur Cherami, on leaving the Rue de la Ville-l'Evéque, followed the boulevard, returning by the way of the Bastile. He did not on this occasion take the omnibus; in the first place because nothing pressed him, and in the second because, as he remarked to himself,—

"If I could but meet by the way some old friend, some jolly buck, I would beg him to serve as my second. At a pinch, if necessary — that is to say if there is nothing else for it — I will make a sacrifice, and pay for his breakfast or his dinner. In either event, be it understood, at a cook shop."

However, Cherami had progressed on his way as far as the Boulevard du Temple without finding what he sought; then he made a halt and said to himself,—

"Shall I go up as far as my place? But what is the use? I shan't find what I want in my hotel. The poor devils who live there have scarcely a coat to their backs. I am sure the Comte de la Berinière will send me very distinguished gentlemen. They will make a singular grimace on

going into the widow Louchard's hôtel. I must have men to meet them who represent—confound it! I have not caught my hare. It is very embarrassing. Pest take the comte and his stubbornness, and his insisting upon witnesses."

As he continued his walk, Cherami saw coming towards him a little gentleman armed with a rather pretty cane of wild cherry wood, and he said to himself,—

"Here's a grotesque individual who recalls to me a guy I have seen somewhere. Why, yes, it's Courbichon; let's seize him on his flight."

The little bald gentleman, was very much astonished to find his way barred by a big man, and he did not appear at all pleased when he recognized in him the gentleman with whom he had dined at the Champs-Elysées. But Cherami took his hand and shook it heartily.

"What a fortunate thing that we should have met, my dear M. Courbichon! 'Bone Deus'! You are no longer in Touraine then?"

"Pleased to see you, monsieur; no, as you see, I am in Paris."

"And you look fresher and more of a jolly fellow than ever. I am tempted to recite to you the fable 'How nice you are; how handsome you look to me.'"

"It is unnecessary, I know it."

"And what a pretty cane you have. It's not the same one, is it?"

"No, monsieur, it certainly is not the one you broke."

"Did you not have it mended?"

"It was not mendable, monsieur."

"Don't tell me that. They mend porcelain very well. This one is a wild cherry wood, let's look at it."

Cherami was about to take the cane, but M. Courbichon immediately put his hand behind him, exclaiming,—

"There is no need of it, monsieur. I have no desire that you should break this one also. It is quite enough to have the first one broken."

"Why, by Jove, my good and worthy friend, who was talking to you about breaking your cane? Nobody is throwing bowls at your shins at this moment, and I like this walking-stick of mine much better than your cherry wood."

"Did that also come from China?"

"No, my dear fellow, don't renew my regrets. My Chinese walking-stick can never be replaced; but enough of canes—I have a very important service to ask of you, my dear M. Courbichon. One of those things which are never refused between men of honor."

"Monsieur, I have no money at this moment, and it would be impossible—"

"Who the devil is talking to you about money?"

Monsieur Courbichon looked at Cherami, who had got himself up very fine to go to M. de la

Berinière's, and took off his hat to him, murmuring,—

"Pardon me, in fact I had not noticed. But then, monsieur, what service were you going to ask of me?"

"Nothing, only a trifle; just to serve as my second in a duel to-morrow."

"A duel? A duel, do you say? And you dare to propose to me to mix myself up in such a thing? What have I done to you, monsieur, that you should propose such a thing to me?"

"Once again, M. Courbichon, it is only a formality; the seconds do not fight."

"I, to find myself in a duel? You must learn, monsieur, that I have never fought a duel. I should prefer to die rather than to fight a duel."

"You are like Gribouille who threw himself into the water for fear of the rain."

"It's an outrageous proposal. I beg of you, monsieur, not to speak to me in future. I do not associate with people who fight duels. Don't detain me, or I shall call for the guard."

The little bald gentleman started off almost running. Cherami shrugged his shoulders, saying,—

"The old guinea fowl! I might have known that the word duel alone would cause him to fly. It isn't he who will be my second. Hang it! I have not caught my hare."

Cherami had arrived nearly at the Boulevard Beaumarchais, when a voice exclaimed,—

"Why, yes, it is he. Here is the gentleman who made us wait dinner so needlessly for him. Thank God! you took long enough to smoke your cigar."

At these well-known accents, "handsome Arthur" turned and perceived Madame Capucine, still surrounded by her two brats, the elder wearing his Henri IV hat, of which the feathers fell over his eyes; and the younger eating gingerbread with which he managed to smear his face.

"Why, really, it is the fair Madame Capucine," said Cherami, approaching the group.

And the fat lady, looking at the elegant dress of her debtor, smiled amiably at him as she answered,—

"I ought not to speak to you again. That was a pretty thing you did at Passy; to leave us pretending you were going to smoke a cigar, and would be back in ten minutes—and that is eleven months ago."

"I am guilty, I know it. I did wrong towards you; but if you knew what events awaited me that day in the Bois de Boulogne—"

"My aunt has a grudge against you; oh, she is furious with you."

"I will make my peace with good Madame Duponceau, and the first time I go to the Bois de Boulogne—"

"Why, no, you must not go to the Bois de Boulogne to do that. My aunt is no longer at Passy. She did not like it there; people dress so much in that part of the country that it really is ruinous."

"So the dear aunt has again changed her villa? She must be rather inconstant. And whither has she transported her mutton, or otherwise her Lares and Penates?"

"To Saint-Mandé. As you may see we are going to take the omnibus which takes us there."

"What! you are going to see your aunt? That's very funny. It must be written that I should always meet you, fair dame, when you are going to see your aunt; but to-day is not Saturday."

"No, but it's my aunt's fête-day to-morrow. Sainte-Elisabeth's day, and our duty is to go and tender our good wishes."

"Ah, I understand now; Madame Duponceau is named Elisabeth."

"Do you want to make your peace with her? It's the easiest thing in the world; come with us. You will give my aunt your good wishes on her festival, and you will dine at Saint-Mandé. My husband will join us at five o'clock."

Cherami reflected for some time. He remembered that Capucine was a corporal in the national guard, and thought that he would perhaps consent to serve as a second. This hope determined

him; he smiled at the fat lady and answered her,—

"I am quite at your orders. I have an important affair in Paris, but your husband can, I think, help me to terminate it. Let us go to Sainte-Mandé."

"Come, you are nice; if you go on like that I shall have to forgive you too."

These words were accompanied by a tremendous ogling. This made Cherami shudder.

"I'm very much afraid that she wants me to continue à le Ballot."

Madame Capucine called Jacqueline. An ancient maidservant with a crooked figure, came up limping and carrying an enormous basket on her arm.

"Zounds!" said Cherami to himself, "here is a handmaid who will not afford distraction to a young hosier's clerk."

"Is the bus here, Jacqueline?"

"It's just come, madame."

"Let us take our places immediately, M. Cherami. Will you give your hand to Aristoloche?"

"Willingly."

"Ah, how agreeably my Aunt Duponceau will be surprised. She is very fond of you, you flighty man."

"She has no business to like such an ungrateful fellow."

They got into the omnibus, Cherami consenting

to hold young Aristoloche on his knee, in order to spare the expenditure of six sous by his mamma. They tried to put Narcisse on the maid's knee, but the conductor insisted that they must pay for him, which seemed to cause Jacqueline very lively satisfaction. At length they started and soon arrived at Saint-Mandé.

Madame Duponceau's new acquisition was quite at the entrance of the avenue. The house was still smaller than that at Passy, and there was no garden, that desirable adjunct being replaced by a yard in which might be seen on all sides nothing but cages of rabbits. It was a veritable library of rabbits.

The aunt came, still shaking her head. She uttered a cry of surprise on seeing Cherami. She tendered her cheeks to him, saying,—

"Kiss me and I will forgive you for your disappearance from Passy."

Cherami thought the punishment rather severe, but he executed his sentence, and while this was going on, Madame Capucine profited by it to tender her cheek, saying,—

"Do the same to me that I may forgive you also."

"Confound it! this dinner is costing me dear," said Arthur to himself, after kissing the ladies.

"You're going to see how pretty my new property is," exclaimed Madame Duponceau. "What a pity that you always come to see me in winter."

"Confound it! this dinner is costing me dear," said Arthur to himself, after kissing the ladies.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY JOHN SLOAN.

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"I don't see what difference that makes here, since you have no garden."

"But I have rabbits."

"Are they handsomer in summer than in winter?"

"No, but they allow themselves to be seen further, because they are not cold."

"I think they show well enough as it is. I should like to have a little refreshment."

"And then you will tell us what happened at Passy to prevent your coming to dinner with us."

Cherami allowed himself to be led all over the house. They did not even spare him the attic. He found everything delightful, admirable, up to the closet in which the maid slept. This domiciliary inspection finished, they begged him to relate his adventures in the Bois de Boulogne. He told everything, being careful only to suppress the names of persons, and when he had finished his relation, Madame Duponceau exclaimed,—

"That is what comes of fighting a duel with pistols."

"Deuce take it!" said Cherami to himself, "who would take the trouble to talk to such people as these? This will teach me; I should have told them the story of 'Bluebeard.'"

Dinner time came, and M. Capucine did not. They waited for half an hour longer, but the two little boys cried so loudly with hunger,

that they decided to sit down to the table They served some soup maigre, then a rabbit stew, and later followed a roast rabbit. Cherami, who saw nothing but rabbit made a grimace, and said to himself,—

"It seems that they are dieting on this animal here, and that scoundrel of a Capucine does not come. I shan't find a second, and I shall eat only rabbit. What am I going to do in this wretched place?"

Instead of vegetables, which were missing, they brought in a hashed rabbit stuffed with chestnuts.

"It is quite singular that my husband doesn't come," said the fat lady. "He must have had some pressing order come in."

"And then, perhaps, he doesn't like rabbit," said Cherami.

"Pardon me, he eats it."

"By the powers! and so have I been eating it for the past hour, but I don't like it, for all that."

"You don't like it? What a pity! we have some more of it coming."

"Some cream of rabbit, perhaps."

"No, but a rabbit pie."

"Thank you, if you will allow it, some cheese will be a very agreeable substitution. I'm not astonished at your yard being carpeted with cages of rabbits. It seems that they are profitable."

"Much more so than fruit trees."

"Come, I see that you will end by making jam of them; but your wine is good and that is something."

"Let's drink to my aunt's health."

"Willingly, long live Elisabeth."

"Aristoloche, Narcisse, come and recite your compliments."

"What! have these dear children learned some compliments?"

"Yes, aunt, you will hear them."

"Why, the dear loves, how nice it is of them. And from whom are these compliments?"

"From my husband, aunt, and in verse."

"Does your husband make verses? I did not know he possessed that talent; and since when has he become a poet?"

"Since we have had a customer, a literary man who writes mottoes, and who brings us some of them every time he comes to the house. Come, Aristoloche, begin; come and stand in front of your aunt, and be careful to pronounce your words plainly."

The little boy wanted first of all to take the gentleman's walking-stick and ride horseback on it all around the table. They could only prevail on him to be good by promising him, if he said his compliment well, to let him play with a rabbit which was very tame and which they sometimes had brought into the drawing-room to amuse the company.

Monsieur Aristoloche placed himself in front of his grand-aunt, and recited, all in one breath,—

> "What happiness on this glad day,
> That prove to you my love I may.
> Of pleasure (such as I must know,
> When to my good aunt's house I go),
> May each one learn from love to spare
> A part—to sweeten friendship rare."

"One may easily perceive that the papa knows a writer of mottoes," said Cherami to himself.

"What do you think of my husband's lines?" demanded Madame Capucine.

"I think them very ingenious; the more so that they would apply to any possible occasion."

"And you, aunt?"

Madame Duponceau was delighted with the compliment, and after kissing the little boy, she said to him,—

"Go to the maid, and tell her to give you Coco, that you may play with him."

Monsieur Aristoloche disappeared; it was his brother's turn to recite his compliment, but young Narcisse was in a bad humor. He pouted.

"Well, monsieur," said the mamma, "can't you come and say your verse to your aunt?"

"No, I don't want to be bothered, I don't."

"What's that I hear, M. Narcisse? What do you mean by that answer?"

"Well, she always lets Aristoloche play with Coco, and she never lets me."

"Will you hold your tongue, a big boy like you who is beginning to write small hand, to want to play with a little rabbit!"

"Yes, yes, I like rabbits, I do. Ow, I want to play with—"

"It seems to me," said Cherami, "that you can't have a grudge against this child for liking rabbits. He is in a good school here. If one eats a thing continually, one sometimes ends by acquiring a taste for it. When I was little, I remember, I couldn't bear porridge. Well, they made me eat it every day to compel me to like it."

"And did you end by acquiring a taste for it?"

"No, I detest it."

"Come, Narcisse, come and recite your compliment to your dearly loved aunt, or else she won't give you any more fine hats with feathers."

"I don't want any more of her feathers. They half blind me! and the boys say I look like an educated dog with that old hat."

"Now, M. Narcisse, we shall get angry if you don't mind. Your compliment at once."

"No, I don't want to say it."

"Well, you'll see, you little rascal."

Madame Capucine left the table, took Cherami's walking-stick, which was placed in a corner, and went towards her son. But young Narcisse, who saw with what he was threatened, set off running around the table, which obliged his mother to run after him still armed with the

redoubtable walking-stick, with which she struck right and left. Thinking she was striking her son, she had already allowed two blows to fall on Cherami's shoulders. The latter found little to divert him in the manœuvres executed by the fat lady and her son, although they reminded him a little of the circus. At length seeing that he was on the point of being reached, M. Narcisse changed his tactics and slipped under the table. Disconcerted for a moment by this manœuvre, Madame Capucine presently found an expedient; she thrust her stick under the table and rained blows right and left, but then it was the old aunt who uttered shrieks. Her niece had whipped her on her calves. Fortunately Cherami managed to drag M. Narcisse from under the table. They placed the little boy in front of Madame Duponceau, and his mamma stood beside him with her stick raised, and said to him in a threatening tone,—

"Your compliment at once."

Monsieur Narcisse, although anything but resigned, muttered in a drawling voice,—

> "Ah, how—ah, how—ah, how pleased I am—
> To—to—to"

"To what, you little idiot?"

"I don't remember any more of it."

"I'll give you some memory, you little rascal."

> "To greet you, charming being."

"That can't be 'charming being,' I'm sure you've made a mistake."

"But niece, why are you not willing that I should be called a charming being," said Madame Duponceau, compressing her lips."

"Why, aunt, because—I know very well it was something else there."

"It seems to me," said Cherami, "that 'charming being' is correct. The word suits the one to whom it is addressed."

The old aunt was so delighted with this compliment, that she rose and kissed her guest again, who growled to himself,—

"That'll give me a lesson."

"Come, monsieur, go on with your compliment," resumed Madame Capucine. And little Narcisse resumed,—

"To greet you—to greet you at this moment."

"There, do you see," cried the fat lady, "I knew very well that it wasn't 'charming being.'"

"It isn't worth while to interrupt him for that, niece; go on, my boy."

But here young Aristoloche came into the dining-room, holding in his arms a little white rabbit, which he was teasing with a stick. This sight greatly distracted M. Narcisse, whose mother was still threatening him with the walking-stick to make him finish his verses; but while delivering them, Narcisse kept turning towards his brother.

"When at your table—at your table.

You'll see if you won't give me that rabbit in a minute."

"No, it was me that they gave it to."

"At your table—
Ah, how time—

I'll smack your face.

"In pleasure flies."

"Mamma, my brother says he is going to beat me."

"Don't listen to him, little darling. It is he who will be beaten if he does not say his verses better for his aunt. Come, Narcisse!"

"In my heart if you would read—

You ask me for my cup and ball again!"

"I don't care, papa will give me another."

"In my heart—

Put Coco down."

"No, I won't put him down."

"All right, you'll see in a minute.

"In my heart—you will see my ardor there."

"You have said your compliment very badly, and you'll have to recite it better to-morrow before breakfast."

"Ma—ma—mamma, he wants to take Coco from me."

Monsieur Narcisse, having finished his compliment, had run to his brother and was trying to take the rabbit from him. Madame Capucine rose and

to terminate this dispute, sent her eldest son flying out of the door with several kicks. Then she came back and seated herself beside Cherami saying,—

"After all, my husband didn't come."

"And it is probable that he will not come now, because it is nearly nine o'clock. It's very vexatious to me, I wanted to speak to him."

"About that little bill? Oh, there's no hurry about that."

"No, it was about something else."

"But, that makes me very uncomfortable to-night. I must tell you that I'm excessively fearful in the country. I know very well that I'm wrong, for in fact, nothing happens to my aunt who lives here alone with her maid; but I can't help it. When my husband is sleeping beside me that gives me some chance of taking a little rest also, but without him, I shan't close an eye. If only we had a man in the house. Why, what would become of us if we were attacked by robbers? No one but women and children in the house."

"What trap is she laying for me now?" said Cherami, stroking his whiskers. "I'll be hanged if I'll pass the night with her; to eat rabbit again for breakfast to-morrow morning. I must hurry away, on the contrary."

"Well, M. Cherami," resumed Madame Capucine, darting a tender glance at her neighbor,

"will you refuse to watch over us to-night? You are your own master, what prevents you from sleeping here? I should be so easy if you did, I should pass such a peaceful night. There is a guest chamber exactly opposite mine."

These words were accompanied by an oblique glance which terminated in a sigh. Cherami set himself to cough in a very significant manner, as he muttered,—

"On the same landing?"

"Why, yes, you can understand how greatly that will ease my mind."

"I understand perfectly."

"You will stay with us, then, that is understood? When the children have gone to bed we will have a game of lotto."

"All this is very enticing."

"It's very kind of you to say so."

"You have said so much to me about it—"

At this moment Madame Duponceau's servant dashed into the dining-room with wild eyes, exclaiming,—

"Oh, madame, madame, if you only knew."

"Knew what, Françoise? You frighten me."

"You may well be frightened."

"Is it fire?"

"Robbers?"

"Why, no, it is your rabbits. That little rascal of a Narcisse has opened all the cages so wide that all your rabbits have got out; they

have all gone one way or another, in the yard, in the cellar, on the stairs."

"Good heavens! you don't say so? But we must catch them again. Niece, M. Cherami, come quickly, I beg of you; bring some candles. Oh, my poor rabbits!"

Everybody darted towards the yard. In this tumult Cherami did not fail to take his hat and his walking-stick; but instead of going back into the yard, he went towards the entrance gate, exclaiming,—

"Here are two who have got out into the road; I will run after them."

"What! do you think?—"

"I saw them."

"Where could they have got out?"

"Under the gate. They burrowed a hole under it. But don't be uneasy; I'll catch them again, if I have to run as far as Vincennes."

And Cherami darted into the road, leaving the ladies and the maid to conduct the rabbit hunt.

Cherami cut across the fields, passed through the village of Bagnolet, reached Belleville, and entered his apartment, consigning the Capucine family and their rabbits to his infernal majesty. He went to bed, saying to himself,—

"No seconds, no witnesses, and the comte's are to come to-morrow at ten. Well, let's get to sleep. There's another day to-morrow."

At seven o'clock Cherami rose and dressed him-

self, and then went to look out of his window. It was hardly daylight and the Rue de l'Orillon was still deserted. At eight o'clock, came a water carrier's cart; the great barrel stopped in front of Madame Louchard's house, and presently the master water carrier and his man came up the staircase with their buckets. Cherami had opened his door; he watched the two water bearers attentively, and said to himself,—

"Here are two solid, good fellows. Confound it! it would just suit my business to have seconds like that. By Jove! one must make some sacrifice, and here is no longer a question of economizing, but of finishing my duel honorably. Come, I think the idea is a good one; besides, I don't see any way of getting any other witnesses."

Cherami waited until the two laborers came down the stairs again. Then he stopped them on the way, made them go into his room, and said to them,—

"Messieurs, I have a service to ask of you."

The master porter, a big robust Auvergnat, answered in the accents of his country,—

"A cistern to carry?"

"No."

"Do you want some water?"

"It is something quite outside the line of your daily duties. It will give you a change."

"We must serve our customers."

"Listen to me first. What if your customers

are served a little later than usual for once? It won't kill them. I have a duel to settle. Do you know what duel is?"

"It is the clock which marks the time."

"You are not anywhere near it, you mean a dial."

The water carrier's man, a young Piedmontese, nearly six feet tall, exclaimed,—

"Yes, yes, I know what it is—a vendetta. I had two friends who had one, and fought with their fists."

"Your young man understands better what I mean. Yes, a duel is a fight, but not with fists."

"And what do they fight with?" resumed the Piedmontese.

Cherami made a grimace, saying—

"Confound it! I like the Auvergnat accent better. But see here, messieurs, it is only a question of being my witnesses. I am awaiting my adversary's seconds; they will come at ten, and you must both be here also. I offer you each a hundred sous for this morning, and at half past ten you will be free, for I do not think the combat will take place until to-morrow."

"Five francs, that will suit us. What must we do?"

"You, in the first place, my boy, will please me best by saying nothing at all, because you have a way of pronouncing your words which would produce a very bad effect. Your master

will say you are a Pole and cannot speak a word of French; so that is your part—nothing to say. Only, messieurs, you must dress; I cannot have seconds in jackets. Have you a coat, my boy?"

"Oh, no, but I have a much finer jacket."

"I don't want to have seconds in jackets. My hostess must have coats of her deceased husband. We'll get her to lend one. Have you a hat?"

"I have a new cap."

"That won't do at all. We shall easily find a hat in the hôtel. And you, master, what is your name?"

"Michel."

"Well, Michel, have you the proper things to dress yourself in?"

"Dang it! I should say so. My overcoat is quite new. I've only had it three years, and it comes down to my heels."

"Then I'll turn you into an old soldier. Go, put on a black collar; go and dress yourself. Put your puncheon where it will be safe, and come back quickly with your boy, that I may dress him. Be here at half past nine, I will tell you what you have to do, and it will be quite simple. You will accept all that the people who come here propose to you."

"We will accept everything. They will pay us something?"

"There's no question of taking anything.

For the rest I shall be here, and I will whisper to you what you have to do. Come, be quick about it."

"And the hundred sous?"

"Here they are; I will pay in advance. You see that I have confidence in you."

"Be quite easy, we shall hold that sacred."

"Come, Piedmontese, come and fix the water barrel."

"Where shall we put it?"

"Oh, at the neighbor's."

The water porters being gone, Cherami went down to his hostess, and said to her,—

"Have you a man's hat you can lend me for this morning and to-morrow?"

"A man's hat, what do you want to do with it?"

"Be easy, I don't want to make an omelette in it, as the conjurors do. It is for some one to wear."

"Yes, I still have one of the late Louchard's hats, that I am keeping to give as a present to my godson when he grows up."

"Do me the favor of lending it to me. I will take great care of it."

"I shall expect you to do that."

Madame Louchard departed, and came back presently with a gray felt hat in good enough condition.

"There! I hope that's elegant enough for you."

"Why, devil take it! it's gray."

"Well, isn't it more stylish?"

"I don't say it isn't—in the summer; but in the month of November, hardly anybody wears a gray hat."

"If you don't like it, don't take it."

"Oh, yes, I'll take it. A Pole may wear gray hats in all seasons. Now, Madame Louchard, I want an overcoat or a sack coat."

"I have only a green coat of the late Louchard's that I was also keeping for my godson."

"A coat? That's risky, because it allows the trousers to be seen. Well, so much the worse, give me the coat."

"And you will be responsible for it?"

"I will be responsible for everything."

Cherami went up to his room with these effects. At half past nine the water porters arrived. The Auvergnat had a big blue overcoat which came down to his heels, a collar which cut the rims of his ears, and a peculiar-shaped hat. He looked like a laundry man going to dine in the city. The Piedmontese was still in his jacket, but he had on a white, sprigged waistcoat and olive-colored velveteen trousers. Cherami made him put on the coat, which was too narrow for him in front, and showed a part of his waistcoat. On the other hand, the late Louchard probably had a very large head, for the gray hat was of such a size that it almost extinguished the young

water carrier's eyes. These preparations finished, Cherami looked at the two seconds, and exclaimed,—

"What the devil will they take you for? Well, so much the worse. You, Piedmontese, will bow every time they speak to you, but you will not answer a word."

"Be easy about that; besides, what should I say to them?"

"Enough; you are M. de Chamousky, a Polish gentleman."

"No, didn't I tell you I was from Piedmont?"

"Hold your tongue! I've turned you into a Pole. You, Michel, you are a rich landowner from Auvergne. At least, you have the right accent."

"Why, yes, I have some land at home and all planted with chestnuts."

"The gentlemen you are to meet will tell you what weapons the comte wishes to fight with, then the time and the place. To all that they propose you will answer, 'Very well, we will accept.' Do you understand?"

"Hang it! that isn't hard.—'That will suit us to a T.'"

"I didn't tell you 'that would suit us to a T.' I said we would accept."

"Good, good, that is the same thing."

"No, confound it! that is not the same thing. Don't make any mistakes, no blunders. By

Jove, I heard a carriage stop in front of the house. Two gentlemen are alighting from it; it is they. Attention! I have left the key in the door that they may open it themselves. I am going into this dark closet. I don't want them to think my apartment is composed only of this room. You must have a serious expression, hold your head high, and look as if you felt quite at your ease."

Cherami disappeared. The two water porters looked at each other with a stupefied expression at seeing themselves so fine. Presently, some one knocked at the door; then as they received no answer, they opened and M. de la Berinière's two seconds came into the room. The one was a man of fifty years, tall, dry, thin, with a rather agreeable expression, who held himself very upright, and dressed very plainly. The other, younger by fifteen years at least, had a gracious expression of countenance, an elegant appearance, and all the manners of a modern Don Juan. It was he who came first into the room, and having glanced around, exclaimed,—

"He can't be here. It isn't here, it can't be here, the woman has told us wrong."

"But," said the other personage, "here are some people, we must ask them."

And approaching the Auvergnat he said, "M. Cherami, if you please?"

The water porter buried his chin in his cravat,

and answered without hesitation, "Very well, we accept." The old gentleman turned towards his companion, who said to him, "They did not understand you." Then addressing the Auvergnat in his turn. "We are desirous of learning, monsieur, if this is where M. Cherami lives?" and Michel answered in his deep voice, "Very well, very well, we accept." Then the young man burst into a shout of laughter, saying,—

"Why, this must be some joke, a wager. What do you think of it, M. de Maugrille?"

"I think that we did not come here to joke, and that if I knew who had the impertinence to try to make game of us—"

Cherami, who was listening, and who saw that his seconds were going to ruin his business, hastily came out of his closet and bowing to the newcomers with much courtesy, said to them,—

"Pardon, messieurs, a thousand pardons. I beg your indulgence for my seconds, very honorable men, for the matter of that, one of whom is a Pole lately arrived in France, who does not know how to express himself in our language. As to the other, M. de Saint-Michel, a rich landholder in the neighborhood of Clermont in Auvergne, he has not yet become accustomed to these kind of affairs. But for that matter, messieurs, as I have decided in advance to accept all that M. de la Berinière proposes, it seems to me that that will greatly simplify your mission,

and that things will go of themselves, my witnesses only being here for form's sake."

"Ordinarily, monsieur," answered M. de Maugrille, "one does not regulate the conditions of the meeting with the adversary himself, but with his seconds."

"I know it, monsieur. By Jove! you can't teach me how things ought to be done in a duel. This is not the first time that I have fought."

"Then, monsieur," said the little man smiling, "why do you have witnesses who look as if they understood nothing of what was going on here?"

"Because I could find no others to my hand," answered Cherami, biting his lips angrily. "Come, gentlemen, let us finish the matter. Is it so difficult for you to say where, when and how the comte wants to fight?"

"Pardon me, monsieur," resumed M. de Maugrille; "but as I hold to things being done according to the usages established for duels, I should say that to your seconds."

"Say it to my porter, if you like. I don't care a rap about it, after all."

"Monsieur, what does this tone mean?"

"It means that you bore me to death with all your affectations, and that if you are not pleased with the tone I take, I will render you satisfaction as soon as I finish with the comte; or even before, if that will suit you better."

"Monsieur!"

The discussion was on the point of turning out very badly, when the Auvergnat, who saw that they looked as if they were quarrelling, shouted in a stentorian voice,—

"Very well, dang it! very well. We accept, and that settles it."

This phrase was uttered in such an original manner by the water-carrier, that the younger second of the comte again burst into a shout of laughter, and Cherami himself could not resist doing the same; he turned away holding his handkerchief before his face. The old gentleman alone preserved his displeased expression. But his young companion hastily said to him,—

"Look here, M. de Maugrille, don't let us complicate an affair which seems to me quite simple. M. de la Beriniére has chosen the sword as his weapon; he desires to fight to-morrow at nine o'clock in the morning in the wood at Vincennes. The meeting will take place at the entrance of the wood at the Porte de Saint-Mandé, by the highway. These are our conditions, messieurs, and do they suit you?"

It was a case of now or never, for the water porter to respond in the sentence that he had been taught, but the Auvergnat looked at everybody, and breathed not a word. Cherami, who looked at the Auvergnat impatiently, at length approached him from behind, and giving him a punch in the side, said to him,—

"Well, M. de Saint-Michel, have you become dumb now?"

"By Jingo! what am I thinking of now. Very well, we accept everything," said he at last.

Then the young man, still laughing, took the old gentleman under the arm and led him away, muttering,—

"We may as well go now, since everything is settled."

Cherami showed the gentlemen out, saying,—

"Be assured, gentlemen, that we shall be prompt at the meeting place. We shall not make you wait. And will you be so kind as to bring some swords, for I have broken mine lately, and I have not yet replaced it?"

"Say no more, monsieur, we will have them."

CHAPTER IX

A Second Duel. Cherami Interviews M. Grandcourt

"Devil take it!" exclaimed Cherami, when the comte's seconds had left. "I thought we should never get out of it. They could hardly swallow my seconds, and, by Jove! I can well understand that."

"Are you not satisfied?" said the water carrier. "It seems to me that I said exactly what you taught me."

"That is to say, you said it when it was not necessary, and held your tongue when you ought to have answered."

"I did not breathe a single word," said the Piedmontese.

"Which was extremely fortunate, for that would have been the last stroke. Well, I've done with you for to-day, you can return to your water barrel; but to-morrow be here, dressed just the same, at half past seven exactly; be sure not to forget, my men."

"Are we to have five francs a head, the same as to-day?"

Certainly, that is understood," answered Cherami.

"We shan't fail to be here."

The next morning the two water carriers were at Cherami's at seven o'clock in the morning, in the costume of the morning before; the Piedmontese having the green coat and Louchard's gray felt hat, which he was obliged to push up off his face at every moment, in order that he might see before him. Cherami hastened to dress himself, and made a careful toilet, which offered a most striking contrast to that of his witnesses. Then he begged his hostess to go and get a cab. Madame Louchard was very uneasy on recognizing the coat and gray felt hat of her defunct husband worn by the water carrier's man. She said to her tenant,—

"Why have you dressed that fellow up like that? He will ruin my husband's effects. I would not have lent them to you if I had known that they were for him. Are you going to a wedding this morning, then?"

"I'll answer for the damage, Widow Louchard; don't be uneasy. Your husband's old coat is honored by its appearance at such a festival as this. Let's get into the cab, messieurs."

And Cherami pushed the water carrier and his man into the cab. He shouted to the cabby to take him to the Porte Saint-Mandé, then placing himself beside his witnesses, said to them,—

"Listen carefully to my instructions for this

morning, and by all the powers, try not to make any blunders; I am going to fight with a third gentleman whom you did not see yesterday."

"Oh, if it's necessary to have a set-to with fists, we are your men. We're solid, aren't we, Piedmontese?"

"Yes, if I wrestle with them I'll give them some good body twisters. I'd much rather do that, than to stand still with nothing to say, just like a goose."

"You must renounce any such idea as that, my good fellow. I did not bring you here to fight, but only as a witness. I shall fight with the sword; you will only measure the weapons to assure yourself that they are of equal length."

"With what; I did not bring a measure."

"They measure two swords by placing them one against the other, it is quite simple."

"And must I say again, 'Very well, we accept'?"

"No, that is needless. You will say: 'Everything is in order, let us proceed.' If I am wounded, you will carry me to the cab which will wait for us and take me home. If it is the other who is hurt—and it will be the other, you will assist his seconds to put him in his carriage. Do you quite understand?"

"Yes, that's all settled."

They reached the Porte Saint-Mandé; these gentlemen got down from the carriage and went

into the woods. The weather was cold and gloomy. It was not yet nine o'clock, and they met no strollers.

"We are here before the time," said Cherami; "but I much prefer that it should be so. Above all, my good fellows, show a great deal of politeness to those for whom we are waiting. Take off your hats and bow to them, and do not put them on again until after the gentlemen have resumed theirs."

"And suppose they don't put them on again?"

"Don't be uneasy about that, they will put them on again. Now there is nothing for us to do but to walk about and wait for them."

"And why shouldn't we go and have a glass of wine at the nearest wineshop, while awaiting the company?"

"My word, I shouldn't have enough of it with one glass of wine."

"And I can't allow any at all, messieurs. After the combat, you can drink as much of it as you please, but not before."

"We would have stood treat to the others when they got here; that's polite, that is."

"Those who are coming would not drink in a wineshop. No stupidity, by Jove, or you will compromise me; but wait, that carriage I see coming down there on the road must be bringing our adversaries. It's a public hack; that is the comte, no doubt. Yes, it is they. Attention,

my seconds! well, what are you doing now? You're taking off your hats before these gentlemen have got down from the cab."

"You told us to be polite."

"I didn't tell you to bow to the horses."

The comte and his seconds alighted from the cab and came towards Cherami. The grotesque get-up of those who accompanied him, seemed greatly to amuse M. de la Berinière, who could not refrain from looking at the two water carriers. The latter, at a sign from Cherami, hastily took off their hats when the newcomers came near them, but in his haste to uncover himself, the big Piedmontese, forgetting that his hat was too large for his head, sent it in M. Maugrille's face, that gentleman being exactly opposite him. The latter made a movement of impatience, but the big fellow hurriedly picked up his hat as he exclaimed,—

"Excuse me, I did not do that on purpose. It got out of my hands."

The comte looked at his seconds, the latter looked at Cherami, and he who was dying with a desire to kick the water carrier, tried to restrain himself, and exclaimed,—

"Monsieur is a Pole, and speaks French very badly; murders it even."

"We can perceive that," answered the comte smiling, "but it is not warm here, and I am in a hurry to get done with it. It seems to me that

we shall be very comfortable behind this little wall."

"That is my opinion also, M. le Comte."

They measured off sixty paces and stopped behind a wall which would hide the combatants from the strollers who might be passing. While the two adversaries were taking off their coats, the younger of the comte's two seconds presented the two swords which he had kept hidden under his coat, to the two water carriers. The Auvergnat was so long in measuring them that Cherami went to him and took one out of his hand, saying,—

"A perfect match, these are exactly the same; I will take this one, unless indeed, M. le Comte prefers it."

But M. de la Berinière immediately took the other sword, while the old gentleman muttered,—

"Why what is the matter with these two idiots of witnesses? They understand nothing at all of the matter."

Cherami hastened to place himself on guard, saying,—

"Whenever you like, M. le Comte, I am at your orders."

"I am ready, monsieur."

Monsieur de la Berinière had been a very good swordsman in his youth, but age had deprived him of his agility and his vigor. It was easy to see that Cherami spared his adversary, to whom

while parrying his strokes, he found a chance to say,—

"Fine play, M. le Comte, very pretty play. You must formerly have been a very good swordsman."

But these compliments instead of flattering the comte, irritated and provoked him, because he perceived he had to do with some one who was sparing him, and suddenly he cried,—

"What the devil, monsieur, why don't you come to the attack? You confine yourself to parrying. Do you think you are fighting with a schoolboy?"

"You wish me to do so, M. le Comte? Then there is nothing for me but to obey you."

And turning aside his adversary's weapon, Cherami suddenly buried his sword in the comte's right side. M. de la Berinière tottered for a moment, and then fell."

"Dang it! he's got all he wants," cried the Auvergnat, while the comte's two seconds tried to help him and carry him away; but at a sign from Cherami the big Piedmontese ran to the wounded man, and lifting him in his arms as if he were carrying a child, he ran and deposited his burden in the elegant equipage, where the surgeon who had come with these gentlemen was waiting, for they had not thought it necessary that he should leave the carriage.

"Well, this matter is settled," said the young water carrier.

The comte's two seconds had some trouble in disposing of the wounded man. Finally, they placed themselves beside him in the carriage, which departed at a foot pace. Then Cherami, left alone with his two witnesses, said to them,—

"The wound cannot be dangerous; it is in the side. He'll be in for it for a fortnight or three weeks; unless, indeed, the sword has touched some vital spot. Ah, they have forgotten to take their sword. I'll take it back myself, and that will afford me an opportunity of inquiring for the comte."

"Ah, dang it! you're a jolly fellow. You rattled it off. Well, now that it's finished, I propose that we go and refresh ourselves at the first wineshop."

"My good fellow, here is a hundred sous each; go and refresh yourselves as much as you like; I shall get into the cab and go back home, unless you had rather come back in the cab, too."

"Not a bit of it! the cab makes me sick at my stomach, doesn't it you, Piedmontese?"

"Yes, yes, I would much rather walk."

"But don't forget, my good fellow, to bring back that coat and Madame Louchard's gray hat presently."

"Don't be uneasy about it, I'm only going to revel a little with our hundred sous."

"Revel, my good fellows; good-day."

"Well, you're pleased with us, M. Cherami, ain't you? We did exactly as you wished."

"Yes, my friends, I am very well pleased."

And Cherami added as he parted, "But heaven preserve me from taking you as seconds again."

The next day after this affair, Cherami, hiding under his overcoat the sword they had lent him to fight with the evening before, went to the comte's dwelling and inquired about him of the porter, who heaved a great sigh as he answered,—

"Would you believe, monsieur, that in spite of his age—for in fact, although he dresses like a young man, it is easily seen that M. le Comte is no longer one—his valet assures me that he is over sixty—well, in spite of his age, he fought a duel yesterday."

"People fight duels when it suits them. There's no prescription against that."

"No, monsieur, people don't fight, and with the sword above all, when their hand is no longer steady, and it seems that M. de la Berinière's adversary was a big sharper, a quarrelsome fellow, one of those men who pass their time fighting duels—a pretty occupation."

Cherami put the sword under his overcoat again, looked at the porter as if he would have liked to swallow him, and exclaimed brusquely,—

"Your reflections are very annoying, I'm going up to the comte's."

"Why, monsieur, no one can go up. M. le Comte is wounded very badly, or so it seems. He is forbidden to read or to speak."

"I do not wish to speak to him, but to his valet, who I hope, is not so stupid as you."

And Cherami rapidly mounted the staircase, opened the door of the antechamber by turning a knob, and found himself face to face with the servant he already knew; he gave him the sword he was hiding, and said to him,—

"Here, my good fellow, is the sword that your master left with the person with whom he was fighting yesterday, and which this person has charged me to bring back to him, and to inquire as to his state. Is the comte's wound dangerous?"

"No, monsieur, the surgeon has declared that it is not mortal, and that monsieur will recover."

"So much the better, your news pleases me greatly."

"Only it will take a long time, perhaps. He will have to be very careful. Monsieur has lost a good deal of blood; he is considerably weakened, and between ourselves, he is no longer young."

"That is apparent to everybody, as well as ourselves."

"He has been forbidden to talk to-day, or to receive any visitors."

"Well, I have not the slightest intention of

asking to see him. I merely wanted to learn how he was. He will get over it; that is the principal thing. That his recovery will be slow matters little. The comte is rich, and can coddle himself in bed as long as it is necessary."

"That is true, monsieur; but this wound comes at a very unlucky time, for I may tell you this, it is no longer a secret, my master is on the point of marrying."

"He's going to marry?"

"Yes, really, a young and very pretty lady, too."

"Well, my good fellow, at your master's age, marriage is a good deal more dangerous than a sword stroke. And the circumstances are aggravated when one marries a young and pretty woman."

"Ha! ha! I believe you are right, monsieur."

"Good-day, I will come back to inquire about him."

"And now," said Cherami to himself, "if I knew where Gustave was, I would inform him that his rival is on his back. Come, let's go to his place and see. His lodging is quite separate, and at a pinch if the porter can tell me nothing, I must again accost his not-too-agreeable uncle."

Gustave's porter knew that the latter was not in Paris, but he knew nothing further about him. Cherami therefore decided to penetrate again to the banker's private room, for he was sure to be found at his offices in the morning.

Monsieur Grandcourt made a grimace as he recognized the person who entered his room. However, Cherami's dress was a great deal more careful than it had been on the occasion of his last visit. With the thousand francs that he had received from Gustave, and his new system of economy, Arthur could no longer be called a ci-devant beau. He had almost resumed his former elegance.

Cherami greeted the banker with the ease that was natural to him, but to which his toilet added more charm. M. Grandcourt answered him by a rather cold nod of the head. As he did not rise from his armchair, Cherami took a seat and began by making himself at home. These gentlemen looked at each other for some moments without saying anything. The banker preserved his haughty expression; Cherami smiled as if he were at the Palais-Royal theatre, listening to Arnal's acting.

"And how goes it with you this morning, my dear M. Grandcourt?" said Cherami at length, balancing himself on his chair.

"I am very well, monsieur, I thank you. Was it to inquire as to my health that you came to my office this morning?"

"Oh, I assure you, although you may not believe me—"

"That is all right; but I remember that my nephew told me that you were desirous of finding

a clerkship. It seems to me, however, monsieur, that you are in a more fortunate position than when I saw you the first time."

"Why, yes, monsieur, my situation is a little ameliorated, but that does not prevent me from looking for a suitable place. I am beginning to get tired of doing nothing; I really want to find some occupation."

"The desire has taken hold of you a little late."

"You know the proverb, 'It's better late than never', and then, after all, I'm only forty-eight years old, I'm not an old man. You are quite that age yourself and you work."

"But, monsieur, I have always worked. It is a habit with me, a necessity. I don't have to make a study of it, which is often repulsive when one begins late."

"Have you a place to offer me, monsieur?"

"No, not the smallest one."

"Well then, why did you put all these questions to me? I presume it was not your intention to give me a place."

"Is it yours to seek a quarrel with me?"

"By Jove, no! I'm seeking no quarrel with you. The uncle of Gustave, my best friend? Ah, if you were not his uncle, I don't say but what —but you are his uncle, let us come to the point. I came to ask you where your nephew is now?"

"My nephew is travelling. He is first in one place, and then in another."

"Ah, I see, it's the same story as it was the last time; you will not give me his address. But suppose I want to write to him to tell him something that will give him great pleasure, that will make him happy?"

"Tell it to me, and I will let him know of it."

"That's not the same thing. All the same, I'm quite willing to tell you. You are not ignorant that his passion—that he really believed he was going to be married this time, but the lady has sent him to the right about again, and given the preference to a very rich old comte."

"I know all that, monsieur."

"Yes, but what you do not know is, that I will not allow any one to trifle with my friend with impunity; that for that reason I sought the Comte de la Berinière, that I challenged him, that we have fought a duel, and that he is now in bed with a famous sword wound in his right side."

Monsieur Grandcourt gave a leap in his chair, and struck his fist on the desk, exclaiming,—

"Is it really possible that you have done that?"

"As I have the honor of telling you. Would you like to embrace me?"

"I should greatly prefer to throw you out of the window."

"Well, as we're on the ground floor, if that's agreeable to you—"

"Why, monsieur, what you have done is shock-

ing, and you call yourself Gustave's friend? Don't you see that it is his unhappiness you are trying to bring about. Can't you see that this Fanny is an odious coquette, who cares only for money and pleasure, and who has never had the slightest feeling of love for my nephew?"

"As to that, I'm entirely of your opinion."

"Well, do you think that a marriage with that woman could make Gustave happy?"

"By Jove, he adores her."

"Well, monsieur, need I tell you that love does not last forever; and besides, of what use is this feeling in a household where it is not reciprocated? Gustave is kind, sensitive, loving, a great deal too loving. He needs a gentle, modest, affectionate companion."

"That is true," murmured Cherami, "and I know of one who is exactly like that."

"And you wish that he should marry a woman who has twice jilted him? Why it was the greatest good fortune that could happen to him, that he did not marry Fanny. All his true friends should have congratulated him on it; and then you go, monsieur, and upset the obstacle which had arisen between my nephew and that widow? You have fought a duel with the one she preferred to Gustave. Cease to call yourself his friend, monsieur, for his greatest enemy could not have done worse for him."

Cherami strode about the room, biting his lips.

"Confound it!" he ejaculated, "it's true. There is something in what you say. At the first moment I did not reflect. I had but one thing in view, to prevent the little widow from making sport of Gustave."

"Why monsieur, she would have made far greater sport of him had he become her husband."

"After all, I have not killed the comte. A sword stroke in the side is nothing, he will get over it, the doctor assures him that he will."

"Yes, that is possible; but who knows whether this duel will not change his plans, his ideas. At the comte's age, a wound, an illness, sometimes ages one by ten years, and then love takes wing and with it the idea of marriage."

"Oh, the comte is very much in love, and when an old house gets on fire it burns much faster than a new one."

"Do you still think, monsieur, that it is so urgent that my nephew should learn the fine thing you have done? Do you want to see him come running again to his Fanny?"

"You have totally changed my opinion, dear uncle. I have no head, I am a thoroughly stupid fellow, but when I feel that I have done something foolish, I'm perfectly willing to confess it."

"That, at any rate, is something."

"But I repeat to you, the comte's wound is not dangerous; he will get over it."

"I hope so, monsieur, and furthermore, that he will marry this Fanny."

"Then you will no longer want to throw me out of the window?"

"Then I will forgive you this new escapade."

"Good-by, dear uncle, you are rather severe to me—well, at bottom I bear you no grudge for it, because I see that you love your nephew."

"Oh, you only discover that now."

"I shall be careful to inform myself as to the health of our old lover, and as soon as he is on his feet again, I will come and tell you, and then if he no longer wishes to marry the little widow —why, by all the powers, he'll have to draw his sword again."

"Monsieur, I beg of you, meddle no more in this matter. It is the only way for it to end well."

"You have little confidence in me, dear uncle, but I will force you to render me justice."

And Cherami left the banker, saying to himself as he went, "This devil of a man is right. I have made a blunder; I am going now to act very differently."

While this was going on they were exceedingly uneasy at Madame Monleard's.

Since the Comte de la Berinière had positively offered his hand, which she had accepted, he had come every day to pay his court. The customary ten months of mourning for a widow

had rolled by, and the comte, who was eager to see his hopes crowned, had already made some of the preparations for his marriage. Among these preparations were the presents, the jewels, the cashmere shawls, which he wished to offer to his future spouse, and on the day previous to that on which he had received Cherami's visit, he had spent the entire day in taking Fanny to see the latest styles in ornaments and in shawls, that he might know her taste and make his purchases to suit them, and the pretty widow had made not the slightest ceremony in getting into the carriage which would soon belong to her.

During the day which had followed Cherami's challenge, the comte, obliged to look for two seconds for his duel, had not had time to go and pay court to Fanny. He had not seen her, until the evening, and, being a well-bred man, he was careful to avoid speaking of the affair he had on hand on account of her. The next day his witnesses had gone to his adversary's house, after which they returned to inform M. de la Berinière that all the arrangements had been made for the meeting. This had again occupied the comte; he was brave, but this duel vexed him, and he showed it in his intercourse with the pretty widow. He was less lover-like in his attentions, less amiable and less cheerful.

When the following day passed without the comte coming to pay her a visit, Fanny was

astonished, impatient and uneasy. Twenty times she went to her mirror, which told her that she was as pretty as ever, and that her aged adorer should be only too happy that she was willing even to seem to love him. However, the evening passed and the comte did not appear.

"He wants to make me delightful presents," said Fanny, "and he wants to bring them to me himself. But all these tradespeople never keep their word. They will keep him waiting in vain, and he would not wish to come without bringing my presents. I shall have them all to-morrow."

On the next day, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, two o'clock, struck and nothing was heard from the comte.

"This is not natural" said Fanny to herself. "Something must have happened. Now that I remember, M. de la Berinière was absent-minded, preoccupied, the last two evenings that he came. I accused him of it, and he told me that I was mistaken. No, I was not mistaken. Justine, go down to the porter's and ask if there are any letters for me, or if the comte has sent any message. These people often forget to tell when anyone has called."

Justine presently returned to announce that there were no letters and that nobody had called. Fanny seated herself at the window, but no one appeared.

At five o'clock in the evening, unable to contain herself longer, she said to her maid,—

"Take a cab at once; here is M. de la Berinière's address, inquire of his porter whether anything has happened to him. If he is ill ask to see him, tell him all the interest I take in his health. Go, that I may know at once what I have to expect."

Justine went off in her cab. The pretty widow counted the minutes, keeping her eyes on the clock until her servant came back. She looked out of breath, affrighted. It was easy to divine that she had much to tell. In fact, she struck her hands together, exclaiming,—

"Oh, madame, something has certainly happened to him. Oh, the poor comte. What an event!"

"What is it, Justine, is he dead?"

"No, madame, he is not dead yet, but he's not far from it."

"What accident has happened to him?"

"It was not an accident, madame, it was a combat with a sword, a duel in fact."

"The comte has been fighting a duel?"

"Yes, madame, and yesterday morning they brought him home wounded, a big sword stroke in the side, which might have proved mortal. However, he will get over it; at least the doctor thinks so, but doctors are so often mistaken."

"My God! this is frightful! and with whom did he fight?"

"Oh, madame, his valet knew nothing as to that."

"Oh, I know who it was. I know who it was. Who but Gustave would have had the idea of fighting with M. de la Berinière? That fellow was born to make me unhappy. Then you did not see the comte?"

"No, madame, they were forbidden to let anyone in to-day, but to-morrow, perhaps, the order will be rescinded."

"The poor comte, I hope that he is not going to die. What bad luck it would be for me."

"That's true. Still, if madame were only the comtesse it would not be half bad."

"You say that the doctor gives hopes of him?"

"It was his valet who told me that."

"Well, I shall go myself to-morrow, but first of all I must see my sister."

"I thought that madame no longer went to her father's."

"Oh, that was because he told me in a fit of ill temper, that he did not want to see me again. He wouldn't think of it again; besides, it isn't my father, it is Adolphine that I wish to see."

The next day at eleven o'clock in the morning, Madame Monleard was shown in to her sister, who uttered an exclamation of surprise on seeing her.

"Why, is this you, Fanny?"

"Of course. Madeleine told me that my

father had gone out, and I am just as well pleased."

"Oh, be easy, his anger has passed. You know very well it does not last long with him."

"But it is I who am angry now."

"You! and against whom?"

"Against everybody. You look astonished. You must know what has taken place."

"No, what has happened to irritate you thus?"

"What has happened, indeed! M. de la Berinière has fought a duel; he has received a serious sword wound; a little more and they would have killed him."

"Oh, good heavens! and with whom did he fight?"

"You ask me? You know very well who it was; besides, it was easy to guess."

"I can't guess, however."

"And who but Gustave would have done so? furious because I preferred the comte to him."

"Gustave? that is impossible; he left Paris a week ago. He came to say good-by to us; and M. de Raincy, who has just got back from England, met him there."

"Is it possible that it was not Gustave? Why, who could it have been then? unless it was that big rowdy who fought with Auguste."

"Yes, it must have been he."

"Why, the man must be possessed. What! as soon as I am married or going to marry he comes along with his sword; why, it is shameful

of this M. Cherami. I, who was so polite to him, who had invited him to come and see me?"

"What, you invited him, a man who had fought with your husband?"

"Well, what has that got to do with it? You know very well that they were reconciled. Well, I am going to inquire about the poor comte. Perhaps he can be seen to-day, and I shall learn how this duel happened. Good heavens! if M. de la Berinière should die, I shall be a widow for the second time, and without being a comtesse."

Fanny left Adolphine, who was quite disturbed, quite agitated by what she had learned. The pretty widow had herself driven to M. de la Berinière's. The doctor had raised the quarantine. People were allowed to see the invalid only on condition that they did not make him talk much.

The young woman presented herself with every demonstration of the most lively interest. She uttered loud exclamations, and sighed deeply and rubbed her eyes so often, that she managed to make them very red. The comte smiled at his pretty visitor, and offered her his hand, which the latter pressed against her breast, exclaiming effusively,—

"If they had killed you, I would not have survived you, but who is the barbarous monster? How did this duel come about?"

"They have forbidden me to talk much," murmured the comte in a feeble voice.

"Ah, that is correct, excuse me, my curiosity is quite natural. Only two words, was it with—the friend of my infancy that you fought?" asked Fanny anxiously.

"No, it was with a gentleman with whom he is friendly—who is called Cherami," answered the comte faintly.

"Monsieur Cherami, the odious man. It was he who fought with Auguste. Why, what have I done to this man? Or rather what has he done to those whom I love? But, my dear comte, you will get well again, there is no doubt of that; then by means of my care, of my love, I hope to make you forget an incident of which I am the first cause."

"This will be nothing."

"No, of course it will be nothing. Oh, heavens, if the wound had been dangerous! If I had had to fear for your life, I don't know what would have become of me. Oh, it is when misfortune comes to those who are dear to us, that we feel —how dear they are," murmured Fanny, affecting to wipe away a tear.

"You are too kind."

"Have you any pain?"

"No, but I am exceedingly weak," replied the comte.

"I will leave you, for in spite of myself, I

might make you talk, and that would tire you. Au revoir, my dear comte, I will come and see you every day, or I will send and inquire about you."

"Thank you a thousand times."

"Let my memory keep you company, as yours will be sweet to me."

As the little woman departed, she said to herself,—

"My God! how ugly he is in bed!"

CHAPTER X

Cherami Desires to Retrieve his Errors The Cousin's Specific. What Happened

Three weeks elapsed. The comte had so far recovered from his wound as to be up and able to walk about his room, although he was still extremely weak, and the great quantity of blood he had lost seemed to have carried with it all his youth, life, and amiability.

Fanny had not neglected him; she had been to see him nearly every day, although it bored her considerably to pass even a short time with the wounded man; but she was very careful to hide this fact and restrain her yawning; she feigned, on the other hand, an increase of tenderness; she found the convalescence longer because of the change she noted in her future husband's temper; he seemed to have grown ten years older in a fortnight. However, the luckless comte was presently well enough to go out in a carriage, and then it was that Fanny murmured, modestly lowering her eyes,—

"My dearest comte, you are now so nearly yourself again, that I think we may at once fix the day which will unite us forever."

But M. de la Berinière shook his head as he answered, "I am not yet strong enough."

And the little widow said to herself, "I am indeed afraid that he will never be—strong enough."

Things had reached this point, when one morning Madame Monleard's maid announced to her mistress that M. Cherami asked if he might have the honor of speaking to her.

"Monsieur Cherami!" cried Fanny, "what! that man dares to present himself at my house—he is my evil genius! but no matter, I am curious to hear what he has to say to me. Show the gentleman in."

Cherami, who had made an elegantly careful toilet, appeared smiling and murmuring,—

"Madame Monleard did not expect a visit from me?"

"Why, no, monsieur, most assuredly not. After what has passed between you and M. de la Berinière, I did not expect to see you at my house; but since you are here, I think you may as well tell me why you challenged a person whom you did not know, and who had done you no injury?"

"By Jove, madame, you should easily guess that. I wanted to avenge poor Gustave, whom you treated like a bum-bailiff."

"Well, monsieur, what right had you to take up Gustave's cause. You saw very well that he

did not dream of fighting a duel himself; he submitted to circumstances; he was amiable, he did not get angry; he went away, and that is all. But you—and your conduct is all the more blamable that lately when I have met you, you have made me a thousand offers of service. You have assured me you would be delighted to be able to serve me, and to serve me you challenge M. de la Berinière, for no earthly reason; you force him to fight a duel and just as he was about to marry me you give him a sword wound. If this is the sort of service you are willing to render me, I will dispense with your obliging offers in the future."

"I will commence by assuring you, madame, that I am conscious of my fault. I yielded to the impetuosity of the moment, but I was wrong. I have understood since that I committed a grievous error; and I came to humbly ask your pardon."

"You confess that you were wrong—that is all very well, but what is done, is done, notwithstanding."

"The comte is healed; he already goes out driving; I know it."

"Yes, the comte is beginning to go out; but he is no longer the same, his humor is totally changed—he has lost his cheerfulness, his light, jocular manner. He was a young man; to-day he is an old man. When I speak to him of our

marriage, he answers me, 'My strength does not return.' In fact he no longer seems to be in love with me and you, monsieur, are the cause of it."

"Well, madame, if I have done wrong I wish to repair it. The comte will fall in love with you again, will be gallant in his attentions and eager to marry you, for I want you to marry him now, and by all the powers I shall be successful; I have caught my hare."

"You've caught a hare?"

"That's a little phrase I'm in the habit of using. I meant to say that I have my plan."

"Is what you tell me quite true, monsieur? Have you really a desire now to see me married to M. de la Berinière?"

"Madame, women have often deceived me; but I have always been frank with them that I might not resemble them, nor have I the slightest reason for lying to you."

"And by what means can you bring it about that the comte shall become as he was?"

"Trust to me; only it is necessary that I should be received at M. de la Berinière's. If I present myself there, he may say that he does not wish to see me. It is necessary that you should have the kindness to say a good word in my favor; that I realize how wrong I have been, and would like to make my excuses, and that I beg you to intercede for me."

"If that only is necessary, consider it done.

Presently I shall go to see the comte; come here to-morrow morning and I will let you know what he says, and whether it is favorable."

"In a week everything will be finished, and you will be a comtesse."

"Really? but what means will you employ?"

"Don't be uneasy, I tell you I have caught my hare."

Towards the middle of the day, the pretty widow went, according to her custom, to see M. de la Berinière, whom she found established in his easy chair à la Voltaire, and drinking an infusion of lime-tree flowers.

"And how are you to-day, my dear comte?" demanded Fanny, seating herself near the convalescent.

"I'm getting along very slowly, fair lady, I thank you. The wound is entirely healed; but I do not recover my strength quickly."

"And what are you drinking there?"

"An infusion of lime-tree flowers?"

"Do you think that that will restore your strength?"

"My doctor says that it is very good—very quieting in its effects."

"It seems to me that you are already quiet enough. Do you know, comte, that I have no great confidence in your doctor?"

"You see, however, that he has cured my wound."

"Your wound would have cured itself. That was not a sickness; but now, instead of making you take strengthening nourishment, he puts you on broth, on white meat, he treats you like a child."

"You're perhaps right, sweetheart. The fact is, he's keeping me overlong on this diet, under the pretext that prudence is necessary."

"If you listen to him, six months from now you will still be under treatment. But enough of that; I am charged with a rather singular commission to you."

"And what is that, sweetheart?"

"The gentleman with whom you had this duel—"

"Monsieur Cherami?"

"Exactly; M. Cherami presented himself this morning at my house."

"Pshaw! does he want to challenge you also?"

"Oh, no, quite the contrary. He came to me to ask pardon for his conduct; he is conscious of the wrong he has committed, he's extremely sorry for what he has done, and in fact, he demands the favor of coming to offer you his excuses and to express to you the joy that he experiences at your cure."

"By Jove, he's a singular individual. He insists on fighting for his friend—"

"Yes, that was in a moment of exasperation."

"And now he is sorry for having done so. But

I have no grudge at all against this gentleman. He used his sword very well; he's really an excellent blade."

"And will you allow him to come and offer his regrets to you?"

"By Jove, look here, I should like it immensely; but only on condition that he tells me who were the two witnesses he brought with him. You cannot imagine, madame, what these two men looked like, who certainly had never found themselves at a similar entertainment. They made one burst with laughter. De Gervier was highly amused, but Maugrille was on the point of being angry; he would have liked to fight with them; I assure you it was very funny."

"Then you will allow M. Cherami to come and see you?"

"Yes, on the condition that I have placed before you."

"That is very easy, I think. To-morrow morning this gentleman is coming to me to learn your answer and I will send him to you."

"Agreed; this M. Cherami seemed to me as witty as he was original."

Cherami did not fail to appear at Madame Monleard's the next day, and she informed him that M. de la Berinière consented to receive him on condition that he would disclose the identity of his witnesses.

"And now," added the young widow, "how do

you expect to restore to the comte his health and good humor?"

"Be quite easy as to that, madame," answered "handsome Arthur," "the comte needs mental resuscitation as well as physical. He's like an old clock which does not go, but as long as the mainspring is not broken it can be mended; I will set him going."

On leaving Fanny's, Cherami took a cab and had himself driven to the Palais-Royal. He went into Corselet's and made them give him a half bottle of chartreuse of superfine quality, then he tore off the label and the seal and everything by which the liqueur might be recognized, put the bottle in his pocket and had himself driven to the Rue Ville-l'Evèque, saying to himself,—

"It's very expensive, but one cannot make too many sacrifices when it's a question of assuring a friend's happiness. There are but one hundred and fifty francs remaining of Gustave's thousand; but I will spend them with a good heart, if that will decide our old lover to marry the little widow."

They announced to M. de la Berinière, that M. Cherami demanded the favor of seeing him.

"Let him come in," said the comte.

Cherami, elegantly attired and perfumed as in his fairest days of fortune, appeared before the comte, who took some steps towards him.

"Pray, do not rise, M. le Comte, they told me you were still weak, and I am only too happy that you are kind enough to allow me to present my compliments and my excuses for the foolish conduct I was guilty of towards you."

"Say no more about that, M. Cherami; you wanted to have a duel with me and you had it; that is all over and done with. Sit you down, and tell me between ourselves, who were those two individuals who served you as witnesses. You must confess that their appearance, as also their manner, was very comical, and I would have sworn that it was the first time that they had assisted at a duel."

"By Jove, M. le Comte, that is the truth, but what could I do? All the persons on whom I counted failed me. I had no longer any choice in the matter, though it cost me something to decide that these two workmen should accompany me to the field."

"What do these individuals do?"

"The elder has a trade in the waters of Mont-Doré, on a rather large scale, the younger is his assistant."

"They are Auvergnats."

"Yes, M. le Comte."

"So I would have wagered. As for that, the younger is very strong also, it would seem, for they told me that he carried me all alone to my carriage."

"That is true; he is very robust. And you are perfectly cured of your wound?"

"Yes, it is healed; but, it is now six weeks after our meeting, and my strength hasn't returned."

"Monsieur le Comte, will you allow me to make you an offer?"

"Let's hear what you have to offer first."

"I've had not a few duels in my time."

"I fully believe it."

"I've been wounded sometimes."

"You use your sword very well, however, but sometimes one is maladroit."

"Well, M. le Comte, a good old cousin, who is very fond of me in spite of my many follies, made me a present of a liqueur with which I very quickly recovered my strength after the severest wound."

"The devil you did!"

"I made use of this liqueur every time I was wounded, and it never failed in its effect."

"And of what was this liqueur composed?"

"I don't know; that was my old cousin's secret, and she died without confiding it to me. But it cannot but be very healthful, since it has always cured me."

"Have you still any of this liqueur?"

"I have religiously preserved some half bottles, and here is one which I ventured to bring with me, in the hope that M. le Comte would have confidence in me."

"By Jove, why not?"

"I shall, first of all, have the honor of tasting some with you, in order to assure myself that there is nothing dangerous about it."

Monsieur de la Berinière had some liqueur glasses brought; Cherami poured his superfine chartreuse, and himself swallowed a glass of it.

"That's good, that's very good," said the comte after drinking, "but it seems to me that it has the same taste as chartreuse."

"Yes, there is really, in fact, a degree of similarity when one is actually drinking it, but the after taste and the perfume are not the same."

"That is possible; I have drunk very little chartreuse, I rarely take liqueurs."

"Then it will have all the more effect upon you. It is, I think, composed of simples, of healing plants—my old cousin often went out gathering herbs."

"It also smells of vulnerary."

"That is a fact; and that, in itself, is very beneficial."

"It is very warming to the chest. It seems to me that I already feel stronger, more disposed to—"

"It works very quickly."

"And how much must one drink to make a perfect recovery?"

"Why, you must drink this half bottle."

"In how short a time?"

"In three days."

"In three days, drink all that?"

"Oh, that does not hold much. Drink four small glasses to-day, five to-morrow, the day after to-morrow six or seven and it will be done. But don't tell your doctor about my old cousin's remedy; he won't fail to tell you that it will do you harm. Doctors never wish people to be cured with anything unless they have prescribed it."

"I am aware of that, but really I do feel better."

"Take a second glass of it immediately, and the others after your dinner."

"Well, I'll resign myself to it. Oh, yes, that has quite a different taste to chartreuse; it is sweeter."

"The more you drink of it, the more you will like it."

"It is delicious; your old cousin left you a very precious possession."

"She passed all her time in composing liqueurs. This will also give you an appetite; you can eat as much as you like of everything; it will make you digest stones."

"It's wonderful; upon my honor, I feel my legs frisky; I feel that I could dance."

"The day after to-morrow you will be able to dance. Allow me to call again within a few days, monsieur, to inquire about your health."

"Whenever you like, M. Cherami; you are an

excellent doctor, and I already feel myself very much better for your remedy."

"Then good-by for the present, M. le Comte; follow my prescription exactly."

"Oh, I shall be careful not to forget it."

Cherami departed, saying to himself,—

"It is impossible that it should do him any harm; it will warm him up a little, that's all. But he needed it, he was turning to a marshmallow."

The young widow was getting ready to go to the comte's on the day after that on which she had sent Cherami to him. She was curious to know if the latter had already ameliorated her future husband's health, when her maid announced M. de la Berinière.

Fanny uttered an exclamation of surprise on seeing the comte at her house, almost as light and cheerful as before his duel. This was the second day of his treatment by chartreuse, the comte having drunk three little glasses of it before coming out. This liqueur, which is really very beneficial when used in moderation, had restored his vigor. It had reanimated his spirits and, delighted by a change which he believed to be the return of his normal state, M. de la Berinière had wished to inform the young widow of it himself.

Fanny evinced to the comte the joy she felt at seeing him restored to health.

"Yes, I am getting along very well," answered M. de la Berinière. "I am acquiring strength so speedily as to surprise even myself. Would you believe, fair lady, that it is to that honest M. Cherami that I owe that?"

"Can it be possible? Is he a doctor?"

"No, but he possesses a liqueur, made by an old cousin of his, which immediately restores convalescents to full health. I have only taken it for two days and I am no longer the same. To-morrow I shall finish the flask, that is to-morrow, Thursday, and at the end of this week, I will lead you to the altar; consequently, everything must be ready."

"But I can't tell you how happy I am to see you altogether better. You have quite recovered your former amiability and cheerfulness."

"Yes, I have recovered many things and, when I have taken the rest of my elixir, you will have a husband of twenty-five."

"Why, you seem hardly more than that to-day."

"Really, you are too kind. I wanted to come myself to inform you of this happy change, and now I must leave you to go to my banker's. I must get plenty of money from him, for I want to cover you with jewels and adornments."

"Oh, M. le Comte, don't go to any foolish extravagance, I beg of you."

"My dearest, I will do nothing but try to

please you, and to-morrow, as I have to make my purchases, I shall perhaps not have the pleasure of seeing you; but you may expect me the day after to-morrow, towards noon—and all the little gewgaws."

Monsieur de la Berinière departed, after kissing the young widow's hand, and the latter gave way to the most lively joy, exclaiming,—

"At last! At last, then, I shall be a comtesse! M. Cherami is a delightful man, and when I am a comtesse with an equipage, and forty thousand francs income, which will not be lost on the Bourse this time, my father will not think I was wrong to refuse to marry Gustave the second time; for in fact, in this world, it seems to me that one must first think of oneself."

When the comte woke on the third day of his treatment, he was quite surprised to feel himself almost as feeble as before having drunk of the precious liqueur. He did not understand that the strength it gave him was fictitious and vanished with the spirits which it contained; he called his valet to bring the precious half bottle, drank two small glasses, one after the other, and soon felt reanimated.

"I'll drink it all to-day," said the comte to himself, as his valet was dressing him. "How many glasses does the bottle still contain, François?"

"Why, M. le Comte, I believe there are at

least six, without mentioning the two you have drunk."

"Well, that will make eight, but that will surely pull me together."

"Are you not afraid, monsieur, that it will be overheating?"

"Not a bit of it; it's merely herbal and very beneficial. Pour me out another glass."

"Here it is, M. le Comte."

"That's right, I'm acquiring a taste for it. It's quite extraordinary, the good it does me. I've a great desire to cut a caper, François."

"Don't do it, monsieur, it will make you giddy."

"Let's see, I have a great many errands to do to-day, a good many shops to visit to buy the presents for my future wife, for I shall be married on Saturday, François."

"Ah, so much the better, M. le Comte."

"I must write a list of the purchases I wish to make. It will be a tiring day's work. François, pour me out another small glass."

"Yes, monsieur."

"I hardly know where I shall dine to-day, I hardly think I shall come back here."

"At Madame Monleard's, perhaps?"

"Oh, no; that would give her too much trouble. I shall dine out with the first friend I meet. Have you had the horses put in?"

"Yes, monsieur, your coupé awaits you."

"Then I'll go. Oh, by Jove, another little glass before I go out."

"Monsieur is quite red now."

"So much the better, my color is coming back. Put the bottle in my carriage and I will finish it during the course of my errands."

The comte swallowed his fifth glass of chartreuse, turned a pirouette in the room and barely missed falling; but his valet held him up and he managed, staggering to the right and left, to gain his carriage, in which he threw himself, saying,—

"I believe the devil has got into me, and that I should be capable of climbing a greased pole."

The day was employed by the future husband in visiting jewelers and shops where they sold laces and cashmere shawls. He gave his orders and from a quantity of those pretty nothings which the ladies call necessary and with which they adorn their whatnots, he made a choice which must prove flattering to the one who was to bear his name.

All these things took up a great part of his time, but he found a moment in which to finish the half bottle he had carried with him; he felt a strange heat in his chest, he felt a great thirst, and said to himself,—

"I will drink some seltzer water at dinner."

At five o'clock as he was coming out of a magnificent novelty shop, M. de la Berinière per-

The Comte . . . turned a pirouette in the room.

AQUARELLE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY JOHN SLOAN.

"Then I'll go. Oh, by Jove, another hide glass before I go out."

"Monsieur is quite red now."

"So much the better, my color is coming back. Put the bottle in my carriage and I will finish it during the course of my errands."

The valet swallowed his fifth glass of claret-wine, turned a pirouette in the room and barely missed falling; but his valet held him up and he managed, staggering to the right and left, to gain his carriage, in which he threw himself saying:—

"I believe the devil has got into me, and that I should be capable of climbing a greased pole."

The day was employed by the future husband in visiting jewelers and shops where they sold laces and cashmere shawls. He gave his orders and from a quantity of those pretty nothings which the ladies call necessary and with which they adorn their wilderness, he made a choice which must prove flattering to the one who was to have the money.

All these things took up a great part of his time, but he found a moment in which to write the following letter to his friend Monsieur Jacques, whom a strange turn in his affairs, he did not choose to ask to his wedding:

"I will [illegible] witness myself at Rennes."

At five o'clock in the [illegible] of a magnificent traveling [illegible], M. de la Barrière pre-

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ceived his two witnesses MM. de Maugrille and de Gervier, who were coming along on his side of the street, arm in arm. He hastened to meet them."

"Good-day, messieurs, where are you going now?"

"Why, we are going to dine."

"With some friends?"

"No, at the first restaurant we come to, provided it be a good one."

"Then you will do me the pleasure of coming to dinner with me, to celebrate the re-establishment of my health, and my approaching marriage."

"So be it."

"Get into my carriage, we shall be a little squeezed, and I will drive you to Philippe's; will that suit you?"

"Perfectly; that's a very good place."

They got into the carriage. On the way M. de Maugrille often looked at the comte. Then he said,—

"Are you completely cured?"

"Why, as you see."

"Your color seems very high, and your eyes shine with an unnatural light."

"That's the result of a remedy I've taken; a very agreeable treatment, by Jove!"

"One your doctor prescribed for you?"

"No, I got it from my adversary, M. Cherami."

"Your adversary, you have seen him again?"

"Of course, we are the best friends in the world. He is hot-headed, but a very good fellow for all that."

"Have you asked who those two Iroquois were, who served as his witnesses?"

"Yes, one of them is a rich landowner of Auvergne, who sends waters from Mont-Doré here; the other is his clerk."

"Ah, the so-called Pole, M. Chamousky. I ought to have known it."

They arrived at Philippe's; the comte ordered a delicate dinner and wine of the first vintage. As he felt very thirsty he thought fit to begin with some champagne frappé. These gentlemen celebrated the re-establishment of the comte's health, and drank to his future marriage.

Monsieur de Gervier, who was in a very jolly humor, actually wanted to drink the health of Cherami's two witnesses. He flattered himself that some day he should meet them and buy some Mont-Doré water from them. The comte did not spare himself, he imbibed champagne, exclaiming,—

"This is the end of my bachelor existence."

"Have a care, my dear M. de la Berinière," said M. de Maugrille to him, "for a convalescent you are going very fast, and are sparing yourself in nothing."

"I have never felt so well."

Suddenly M. de Gervier, who had gone for a moment to the window to get a little air, burst into homeric laughter, exclaiming,—

"Here they are, it is really they; I recognize them."

"Whom are you talking about?"

"The dealers in the waters of Mont-Doré; come and look at them, they are passing through the street, and have their barrel with them."

Monsieur de Maugrille went to look at them, and uttered an indignant exclamation,—

"Water carriers! why, they were water carriers!"

The comte, who had gone to look at them also, asserted that he did not recognize them. At length M. de Gervier resumed,—

"Why, good heavens, that isn't Mont-Doré water they are selling. But after all, that is a water which is still more indispensable. As for me, I think the thing droller than ever, and this duel will be one of my most spicy memories."

Monsieur de Maugrille held his tongue and made a grimace. The comte, however, returned to the table, saying,—

"Come, messieurs, this must not prevent us from drinking to my future happiness. It is extraordinary how thirsty I am this evening."

The dinner was prolonged, but at length they left the table and separated. De Gervier went to see his inamorata; M. de Maugrille went to his

game of whist, and the comte betook himself to bed; he felt very tired.

The Wednesday came; the pretty widow expectantly awaited all the presents that her future husband had promised her, and she said to herself,—

"I flatter myself to-day that it will not be as the other time; I shall not expect them in vain. He can't have another duel, no one has any further desire to challenge him; M. Cherami is now in my interests, he desires that I should marry the comte. It is singular how he has turned; perhaps he has broken with Gustave. The principal thing is, that he has kept his promise and restored M. de la Berinière to health, and that is a service which I shall not forget."

However, noon, one o'clock, two o'clock sounded, and nobody appeared; neither the affianced nor his presents. Fanny walked impatiently about her room, muttering, "Oh, how tiresome it is to wait; it is perhaps not the comte's fault, but for some time past it seems to me that everything has been against me."

When four o'clock struck, the young woman could contain herself no longer, and said to her servant,—

"Justine, you must go again to M. de la Berinière's, to inquire if anything has happened that has prevented him from coming. I cannot pass my life in awaiting this gentleman; go, and

hurry, take a cab by the hour; I shall ruin myself in cabs for this man; it is to be hoped that he will repay me."

Justine carried out her mistress' orders; but when she returned her face was all upset.

"Good heavens, has anything else happened to him?" cried Fanny.

"Madame, M. le Comte went home yesterday evening towards ten o'clock with a violent headache; he had dined at a restaurant. He was hardly in bed when fever came on and then delirium; they sent for the doctor, who declared that M. de la Berinière had inflammation of the chest and indigestion; in fact, he is very ill."

"Oh, Justine, am I not unlucky? to go and give himself indigestion just when he is going to be married."

"It's unpardonable, madame."

"And to think that that should happen to him just at the last moment. He has some people near him, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, madame."

"Do you think that I ought to go there this evening?"

"Of what use would it be, madame, since he is delirious? He will not recognize you."

"Come, I will go to-morrow. Oh, I am really to be pitied."

Three days later, on the Saturday, Cherami went to the Rue Ville-l'Evèque.

"Let's see what effect the tonic that I gave the dear comte has had. It was Sunday that I came to see him, he must now be quite set up, or he never will be," he said to himself.

Accordingly, Cherami penetrated into the comte's antechamber and there found the valet, who held a handkerchief to his eyes.

"What is the matter with you, and how is my friend, your master?"

"The comte died last night, monsieur," answered the valet, sighing.

"Dead!" cried Cherami, "what are you telling me? Dead in so short a time! And what the devil did he die of?"

"Inflammation, brought on by indigestion."

"Poor comte, I am really very sorry," and Cherami left, saying to himself,—

"Perhaps we overheated the oven a little."

CHAPTER XI

The Return of Ulysses. Love Recompensed at Last

The poor Comte de la Berinière had now been dead for upwards of a month, and whether from grief at his death, or from vexation at her loss of his wealth and title, during this time Madame Monleard had remained shut up in her own house, and had refused to see anybody, making no exception of either her father or her sister. She should, however, have known that Adolphine would be the first to compassionate her sorrow; but insensitive people never believe in the sensibility of others and if anyone pities them they are fully persuaded that in reality people are rejoicing at their misfortunes. That proverb which says: "People judge others by themselves," is, like many others, undoubtedly true.

Monsieur Batonnin, who was always the first to be informed of anything of a vexatious nature that had happened to his friends or acquaintances, had early learned of the comte's death, and, in the fervor of his friendship, had gone at once to M. Gerbault's to say to that gentleman,—

"Are you aware of the cruel event, the misfortune, that has happened to your eldest daughter? The Comte de la Berinière is dead, and that before he has married her."

"It seems to me," Fanny's father had answered, "that the misfortune is rather the comte's than my daughter's."

"Of course, but after all, the comte was no longer young, while your daughter would have been a comtesse, would have had forty thousand francs income, and I think that in marrying the comte she would have advanced her fortune. One does not find such husbands as these every day."

"Monsieur Batonnin, it is very sad to speculate on the death of a person one marries."

"True enough, it is so; but it is done, nevertheless."

"You may say what you like; I do not pity my daughter."

"You surprise me."

Adolphine, finding that her sister did not come to see her, had repaired to her house; but each time the porter had said to her,—

"Madame Monleard is gone out."

And the young girl had understood that her sister did not wish to receive her.

One morning, Cherami was getting ready to go out when Madame Louchard came up to him, and said with a mysterious air,—

"There is some one downstairs, who is inquiring if you can be seen, and I came upstairs to make sure that you were dressed and about."

"And who is this person who makes so much ceremony about coming up to see me?"

"She is a young and pretty lady."

"A young and pretty woman comes to see me? Ah, worthy hostess, I can almost believe myself back in the time of my youth."

"Shall I go and tell the lady to come up?"

"Just a minute, let me fluff my hair a bit and make a straight parting, and see that my whiskers are well combed."

"What a vain fellow he is!"

"It isn't forbidden to make oneself look as well as he can. Now you can show the individual up. I have caught my hare."

A very well-dressed little lady, with a distinguished carriage, presently came into Cherami's room; when she was certain that he was alone, she raised her veil and said to him,—

"Good-day, monsieur, do you not recognize me?"

"Why, God forgive me! it is Madame Monleard, the charming widow. Sit you down, fair lady, and excuse me that I do not receive you in a palace; but for the time being, I have only this wretched hovel at my disposal. What has procured me the pleasure of your visit?"

"I want to speak a little with you. A sad

event has happened lately; we have not seen each other since."

"Don't mention it. The poor dear comte's death has quite upset me. I should not like to believe that—"

"The more so that he appeared quite on the way to recovering his health. What in the world did you make him take?"

"By Jove! merely a little chartreuse, an excellent liqueur, and very strengthening. But it seems that he had dined with two friends, that he had indulged rather freely in the good things, and that the champagne made him ill."

"In fact, he is dead. There is no getting over that, only it is doubly unfortunate for me. I lose a great fortune and a title which I was about to possess."

"That is true, you have lost all that."

"And then again—I have lost—I have lost—the husband with whom I broke my engagement —in order to become a comtesse."

"Correct; you have lost both of them. Here you are almost the widow of three husbands."

"Good heavens! it seems to me, however, that my momentary ambition was quite excusable. Who is without it in this world? We all try to raise ourselves."

"That is the first thing to which we aspire as soon as we are born."

"Monsieur Cherami, are you still friendly with Gustave?"

"With Gustave? Oh, that is a friendship which will last through life—to death; there has never been the slightest lapse in our friendship. I would go through fire and water for the dear fellow."

"That is very nice indeed, and tell me, do you know whether he is soon coming back to Paris?"

"Hum—I see what you're coming at," said Cherami to himself, caressing his whiskers. Then he answered,—

"Why, no, according to what I have learned at his uncle's house, it seems that Gustave, instead of returning to France, is going to Russia, where it is probable he will remain for a long time; perhaps a year or two, or even four."

Fanny made a movement of vexation, as she said,—

"What an idea, to go to Russia, a country where people freeze, when one can live so pleasantly in France, above all in Paris."

"Pardon me, the women are not frozen in Russia. It seems that some of them are very pretty and immensely rich. Gustave is a very pleasing fellow; he will turn the head of some noblewoman and make a dazzling marriage there."

The young widow rose abruptly, pulled her veil down over her eyes, and said,—

"Good-by, M. Cherami, I must leave you."

"What, already? Madame has not then anything else to tell me?"

"No, to be frank, I was desirous of having some news of Gustave; but what you have told me—but perhaps he will change his mind; he will not remain in Russia, he will get tired of it. At any rate, if you should learn anything in regard to him, if you learn exactly where he is, will you be so very kind as to let me know?"

"Madame, I shall always be extremely happy to oblige you in any way."

"Good-by, M. Cherami."

Fanny had gone, and Cherami, as he looked after her, said to himself,—

"I tell her where Gustave is, not if I know it; I think, God forgive me, that she has the desire to run after him, that she hopes to catch him in a net again. Ah, he must have been either stupid or bewitched. But there are some men, of good parts even, whom love renders as stupid as fools. I've lied already to the little widow in informing her that Gustave had gone to Russia. When I went to his porter's to inquire about him the day before yesterday, he told me that he expected the banker's nephew within a few days. By all the powers! I must go there again; perhaps he has got back."

Cherami hastily repaired to the banker's dwelling, and the porter shouted to him, "M.

Gustave Darlemont returned yesterday; he is at home."

Then our man scaled the stairs and in two seconds was with his young friend and began by throwing himself into the latter's arms. After the first effusiveness, Cherami looked at Gustave and uttered an exclamation,—

"Great Jupiter! how did you come by that?"

This exclamation was torn from him by the sight of a large scar which crossed the brow of the young man, cut his left eyebrow and terminated at the end of his jaw.

"That," answered Gustave, smiling, "was the result of a sabre duel with an Irish officer. You have fought for me here, my dear Cherami, 'twas the least I could do to take care of my own affairs over there."

"What, you know about it? But come, let me shake hands with you again. This gash is very becoming to you; and now I am delighted that you have had this duel in which your adversary has managed to scratch you. Ten thousand devils! what a slash! Ah, they can no longer say I fought for you. This will silence a good many evil tongues. By the way, what was the cause of this duel?"

"Oh, it was at the end of a breakfast with some artists, men of business and an Irish officer, where a good deal was eaten and drunk. They were speaking of women; that inexhaust-

ible subject of conversation among young men; I said that the French, even those who were not pretty, always carried themselves with a certain grace not surpassed by the women of other countries. Thereupon the Irishman got angry and called me a beardless youngster. I threw my napkin in his face, and after that it was a duel with a sabre, this being the weapon chosen by my adversary; and this wound was a very long time in healing. I was kept in bed six weeks by it, or else I should have been back long ago."

"My dear Gustave, it's a beautiful wound, a beautiful scar. It's very becoming to you, and again I compliment you on it."

"And I have reproaches to give you, rather than compliments. Tell me why you challenged that poor Comte de la Berinière. What had he done to you?"

"He had done nothing to me, but he had done you a bad turn in taking away your betrothed."

"Why, my dear fellow, upon reflection, don't you feel that on the contrary he rendered me a great service? But for him I should have become the husband of a woman who has never had the slightest affection for me, and who did not hesitate to throw me over as a package of goods is rejected when an opportunity occurs of having something richer at the same price. This woman, as the price of my constancy and of the tortures that I had suffered on her account, did not hesitate

to jilt me for the second time. But, my dear fellow, I know her now and appreciate her at her true worth. Hard-hearted, egotistical, vain to an extreme, loving only money, recognizing no merit but in fortune, incapable of making the slightest sacrifice for others, and thinking that everything is due to herself; that is the kind of woman I should have made my companion. Should I not be immensely grateful to the person who caused me to break with her?"

"Do I really understand you, Gustave? You speaking thus of Fanny? Why, you must be cured at last of your passion for her."

"Oh, yes, quite cured. Did you really think, Cherami, that I should be so lost to self-respect as to love her after the last slight she put upon me?"

"I thought that she had thrown a charm over you, although I don't believe much in sorceries; but you no longer love her, that is the principal thing. You are aware that the poor comte died before marrying her? But not of his wound; he was taken off by a fit of indigestion."

"Very unfortunate for the lady, but I must confess that I don't pity her."

"One thing you do not suspect, and that is that she is thinking now of running after you."

"Let her run, my dear fellow; I assure you she won't catch me again."

"Are you quite sure of yourself?"

"Perfectly sure."

"She's a great cajoler, is the little widow. I should be more sure of you if you were in love with somebody else."

"In love with somebody else? You must confess, Cherami, that Fanny's treatment is not calculated to encourage me to be so."

"All women are not like Fanny. There are some who are tender, loving, good, who would be very happy were they loved by you."

"Happy were they loved by me? What makes you think so?"

"I think it, because I am sure of it."

"You are sure that they would love me?"

"Better than that, I am sure that there is one who does love you. One who nourishes a secret passion for you, a feeling that she has always hidden, buried in the depths of her heart, because it was without hope; because she was only to you the confidant of your love for another."

"Good God! what are you saying?" cried Gustave, suddenly enlightened. "You think that Adolphine—"

"Ah, you've guessed it; so much the better. It proves that you had a presentiment of the thing."

"Why, no; what should make me imagine that Adolphine thought of me?"

"Had you not been in love with another, you would have seen it for some time past. I long

since divined it from a great many little things; from the manner in which she looked at you, for a woman does not look at the man she loves in the same way that she looks at other people. I've made some studies of that. And then, what made me altogether sure that she loved you, was that when I went to M. Gerbault's to inform him of poor Auguste's unfortunate end, I hardly knew how to break the news and I did not explain myself clearly, and Mademoiselle Adolphine thought I had come to announce your death. She immediately uttered an exclamation of despair, she lost consciousness, and we had a great deal of trouble in restoring her. I had to say to her a great many times, 'It isn't Gustave who is dead,' before she came to her senses. But I said to myself, it is this one and not the other who cares for my young friend, and I have quite an idea that Papa Gerbault made the same reflection as myself."

"And why did you never tell me all that, Cherami?"

"Because it isn't worth while to sing a pretty song to a deaf man; you were then so bewitched by that Fanny that you would not have listened to me."

"Thank you, my dear fellow, thank you for having noticed it. You don't know how moved I feel on learning all this."

"Why, yes, it's always agreeable to know that

one has turned a young and pretty girl's head."

"Poor Adolphine, if it be true that she loves me—"

"And all the suitors she has refused. It seems to me I've heard it said that the comte wanted to marry her. Then there was a M. de Raincy, and a great many others. What motive could she have had in refusing all who presented themselves, if she had not loved some one else, and the one she loved was you. However, she had no hope of marrying you; how different to her sister! Well, I've said what I had to say to you, and you can do as you please. But now you are back again, I hope that you're not going to start off again to-morrow."

"Oh, I sha'n't go away again, that is all done with; I've had enough of travelling. Now I shall settle down in Paris."

"Hurrah! that's the jolliest thing I've heard for a long time. But do you know that your uncle is still as close-fisted as ever in regard to me? He did not receive me at all well when I asked him for a situation."

"Never mind, my dear fellow, now that I am here, I'll see what I can do for you, and we'll soon settle all that."

"Very well, now I will leave you, you must have a good deal to do. When shall I see you again?"

"Come in a few days, and I shall be able to tell you then what I have done."

"I will do so; au revoir. My friend has got back, I have caught my hare."

Gustave remained for a long time plunged in his thoughts. What Cherami had told him about Adolphine had deeply moved him. Possessing a sensitive heart, a mind formed to love, Gustave had as yet met only deceit and treachery. He recalled to himself now a thousand circumstances in which Fanny's sister had evinced the liveliest interest in him. To him she had always been good, had always had a consoling word. He recalled also her habitual melancholy, her sad smile, and her sighs which, when near him, she in vain sought to hide. The impulse of all these memories rushing to his mind, impelled the young man to leave the house hurriedly, saying to himself,—

"I must go to her; I shall be able to see from her eyes if she really loves me."

Adolphine was in her room, working at her embroidery. Madeleine was coming and going and arranging things around her mistress. The maid was an honest girl, who had been quick to divine that her mistress had a love affair. She had seen her smile and appear happy only when she had received visits from Gustave, and when lately she had heard it said that the young man was going to marry her mistress' sister, she had

seen Adolphine relax into melancholy. Later on they had said that the engagement was broken; but for all that, Adolphine no longer smiled. It was true that the young man who could bring a smile to her lips had also ceased to come there.

Madeleine would have very much liked to gain her young mistress' confidence, but the latter was careful to keep in the depths of her heart a secret which she believed hidden. However, the young servant found a way, by going about, to sometimes catch a few words by which she satisfied her curiosity.

"Mademoiselle," said Madeleine, "isn't it quite singular that madame, your sister, never comes to see you now?"

"You know very well that my father is vexed with her."

"That did not prevent her coming when she wanted to know who it was that had had the audacity to fight with her comte. She was sure that it was M. Gustave, but you told her that she was quite mistaken, and you were right. Why should M. Gustave fight for that lady, anyway? She is always making game of him. People only fight for those they love, and I am quite sure that M. Gustave doesn't think a bit more about your sister."

"Do you think so, Madeleine?" These words were said with an eagerness which would have

betrayed Adolphine's secret, if her maid had not already guessed it."

"But Fanny is not married," sadly murmured Adolphine, after a moment.

"Well, mademoiselle, I think that's the best thing that could have happened. She would have kicked up too much dust, if she had been a comtesse."

"But when Gustave comes back, what will happen then?"

"What! do you think he will still want to marry your sister?"

"Why not, he loves her so dearly."

"Oh, well, I'll bet you he won't. The idea! mam'selle, after jilting him twice like that, for you told me that this was the second time she had been engaged to him. Why, he must have been quite silly. Is M. Gustave stupid, mam'selle?"

"Oh, no, on the contrary—"

"Well, then you'll see—"

At this moment the bell was heard. Adolphine started, she knew not why, and Madeleine exclaimed,—

"Why, if that should be him; speak of the devil—"

It was indeed Gustave, and Madeleine was beaming as she came to announce him to her mistress. The young man presented himself with a certain embarrassment caused by Cher-

ami's confidence, but Adolphine offered him her hand and he pressed it in his own so hard that the young girl was much moved; for Gustave had never evinced such ardor at any of their previous meetings. Presently perceiving his scar, Adolphine uttered an exclamation of fright.

"Oh, good heavens, M. Gustave, you are wounded!"

"Not a bit of it, can't you see that it is all healed."

"But you have been cruelly wounded. How did it happen?"

"It was a sabre stroke."

"You have been fighting a duel, then?"

"Yes, with an Irish officer; I was in London then."

"And for what, for whom did you fight a duel?"

"Oh, for a very small thing. A quarrel at the close of a breakfast."

"Good heavens, if you had been killed—"

"I should not now be near you."

"Was it a serious wound?"

"Yes, for it kept me in the house for six weeks. But for that I should have been back more than a month ago."

"More than a month ago; ah, you would have come back directly you learned what had happened?"

"Why should I have done that?"

"Why—because—but you know very well what I mean."

"No, I do not. I wanted to come back because I had finished my uncle's business—because I was tired of England, and had no further motive for staying away from Paris."

"Was that all?"

"Of course, what motive do you suppose I could have had?"

"Then you don't know that the Comte de la Berinière is dead?"

"Pardon me, I do know it."

"And before marrying my sister?"

"I know all that."

"Oh, then, it was not that, that made you come back."

"Do you think, mademoiselle, that I can still love your sister? Oh, no, you can't think so, for you would despise me if you had such an opinion of me."

"Is it possible? What! Gustave—M. Gustave, you no longer love my sister? How fortunate; good heavens, I don't know what I am saying. It is because I think you will be happier now, and I have seen you sad and suffering for so long."

"Yes, I have been so for a long time. And don't you think that I deserve to be recompensed for my constancy by meeting some one who will understand me? A woman who will have a little love for me."

"A little? Oh, a person could love you very

dearly, it seems to me, because—you deserve it so well."

"Dear Adolphine, ah, forgive me, mademoiselle, if I dare to call you so still."

"Why, that does not vex me. On the contrary, I—"

"You have always been so good to me. If you did but know the pleasure I experience at this moment in finding myself again with you. In looking at you, in reading in your beautiful gentle eyes—oh, don't lower them, let me find in them the hope of a pure happiness and sincere affection."

"What do you mean? You frighten me. Do not say such things to me, unless you mean them, because I also have been very unhappy for a long time. I have suffered in silence, for I dared not confess what I felt; and I had to witness the happiness of another who was loved, who was adored, although she did not deserve the love that was lavished upon her, and I had to hide the love that I felt."

Gustave took Adolphine's hand and fell on his knees, exclaiming,—

"It is true, then, you love me. Ah, all my life will not suffice to recompense that love. How many days of happiness ought I not to give you in exchange for the sorrow I have caused you?"

"But that was not your fault, Gustave. You could not guess that I loved you; besides, you

loved my sister then. But now you no longer love her, do you? Ah, tell me again that you no longer love her."

"As if that could be possible. There is room but for one in my heart, and now it belongs to you alone."

"I must be dreaming, I am so happy. Madeleine, Madeleine! come here. It is me whom he loves! It is me whom he wants to marry now! And he knows that I will not refuse him."

Madeleine was not far away; maids never are far away when people are talking, and she came rushing in, for she was really happy because her mistress was so, and she said to Gustave,—

"We were talking about you, when you came, monsieur. I often talked about you to mam'selle, because I saw that she would always listen to me when I did so. Mercy, I'm only a country girl, but I guessed right away what made mam'selle so sad, and now I am quite sure that she will be as happy as I am, and that she will dance and skip about the house like me."

Monsieur Gerbault's arrival put an end to Madeleine's ecstasy. He was always surprised when he found Gustave at his house. But this time what struck him most was the joy, the happiness, which he read in all their faces.

"Why, by Jove," said he, holding out his hand to Gustave, "have you come back from the war, my dear fellow? At all events you've got a

wound which proves that you did not turn your back on the enemy."

"No, monsieur, that's the result of a duel. I am not quarrelsome, as you know, but one cannot always answer for himself."

"And you have come back to Paris to stay for some time?"

"Oh, forever; I have no further desire to travel now. My uncle has had the kindness to assure me that I do well at the business, and he declared yesterday that he would make me his partner."

"Devil take it! that's very nice, that is; for your uncle does a large business."

"The least that he makes is sixty thousand francs a year."

"Of which you will have the half. Why, you are quite an eligible young man. And talking about eligibles, Adolphine, I have one to propose to you, and this time you will accept perhaps; for, of course, you do not wish to die an old maid."

Adolphine looked anxiously at her father. Gustave himself experienced a vague fear. M. Gerbault looked at them both with a certain shrewdness, and resumed,—

"Yes, my daughter, a new suitor presents himself. He is considerably more than twenty-five; he is not very rich, but he is in easy circumstances and is an honorable man—in short, it is M. Batonnin."

"Monsieur Batonnin—I won't have him. I don't want anybody—that is to say of those that I—"

Gustave hastily interrupted Adolphine, and advancing towards M. Gerbault, said to him bravely,—

"It is a long time now, monsieur, since I should have been your son-in-law. Circumstances were opposed to it, and if the truth must be told, I think I ought to thank destiny for it. To-day I come again to ask you to admit me to your family. Mademoiselle Adolphine has consented to be my wife, and something tells me that she will not retract her word."

"Yes, father, yes. I accept Gustave, and you are quite willing that he should be my husband, are you not?"

"Yes, and the more willing," responded M. Gerbault, kissing his daughter, "because you have loved him for a long time."

"What, father, did you know that? Why, that is very singular. I never told my secret to anybody."

"Why, a father's eyes are clairvoyant, my darling, and now I hope that you will recover your cheerfulness."

"Oh, father, I am very happy."

"Gustave, you may marry Adolphine. She will never give you up for another, for even when she could not hope to be your wife, she refused

all her suitors that she might be free to love you. As to M. Batonnin, I was sure in advance of the answer you would give him, Adolphine; but to soften your refusal I shall say to him, 'You came too late, she's going to marry Gustave.' "

CHAPTER XII

Tertia Solvet. The Pocketbook

The marriage of our friend Gustave and the faithful Adolphine had been a settled thing for four days. The two young people were eager to enter on their new life, and attain a happiness which would fulfil their highest aspirations — a happiness which had hitherto seemed to flee Gustave, and to which Adolphine had never hoped to attain; so they naturally hastened the preparations which were indispensable to the accomplishment of this union.

Upon this occasion, M. Grandcourt did not, as on a previous one, make a grimace when his nephew informed him of his new choice; on the contrary he observed, —

"That's a very good hearing indeed, that is! Adolphine is a charming girl who possesses all those good qualities in which her sister is lacking, and she has them in abundance. You could not have done better!"

More than once, while her young mistress was busily trying on her new gowns and the ornaments which Gustave had brought her, the maid, Madeleine, cried, —

"Oh, mam'selle, how nice you will look as a bride. But what about your sister? Won't she turn up her nose when she learns you are going to be married?"

"Hold your tongue, Madeleine, don't speak of my sister. It seems to me that she will yet come and disturb my happiness."

"The idea; there is no danger of that, mam'selle. I'll answer for M. Gustave, that I will."

This conversation between Adolphine and her maid was being repeated one morning, when the bell rang violently.

"Good heavens, if that should be she!" said Adolphine.

"Your sister, oh, well, after all she can't eat us."

It was, in fact, Fanny, who came into her sister's room wearing an insolent expression and exclaiming,—

"What does this mean? Do you understand anything of this? What, M. Gustave has been back in Paris for the past week, I believe, and no one has seen fit to tell me; and that big scamp Cherami told me that he had gone to Russia. Ah, I shall have something to say to him when I meet him again. Have you not seen Gustave? Does he not come here?"

"Why, yes, indeed," answered Adolphine, trying to hide her emotion, "he comes here; he comes here every day."

"And you could not inform me?"

"I have been to your house several times and you were always out."

"You might have written me a word."

"But I could not guess that you cared so much to see Gustave after your conduct towards him."

"Oh, my dear, you're not going to bore me with all that, I hope. What has passed is only a dream; but what is not done, can always be done."

"I don't understand you."

"I understand myself, and that is enough. And how is Gustave now? Still sad and melancholy?"

"Oh, not at all; he is cheerful, amiable, not at all the same as he used to be; you wouldn't recognize him."

"Oh, he is cheerful."

"And then he has a handsome scar on his forehead; it gives him a martial air; it suits him very well."

"Oh, perhaps that's what makes him so cheerful. He has been fighting a duel, then?"

"Yes, with an Irish officer."

"Everybody is getting embroiled. He must have been following the example of this M. Cherami; and how about his business?"

"His uncle has just made him his partner. Gustave will have as his share at least forty thousand francs a year."

"Is it possible? He is lucky. And he has been for a week in Paris, and I didn't know it. Why, how everything is upset here; have you been buying all this stuff?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to a ball?"

"Better than that, I am going to a wedding."

"To a wedding, and they haven't invited me? And pray who is going to be married?"

Adolphine hesitated before answering, when the door opened and Gustave appeared. On perceiving the one whom she had twice been about to marry, Fanny dropped into an armchair, leaned back in it, and pretended to be fainting. Adolphine became deathly pale, but a look from Gustave reassured her, then approaching her, he took her hand and pressed it tenderly in his own. Fanny seeing that no one was troubling about her, decided not to faint after all, and sat up, saying in a voice which she contrived to make tremulous,—

"Good heavens, M. Gustave, your presence overcame me. I was barely able to keep from fainting."

Gustave gravely bowed to Fanny, and said to her in a careless tone,—

"I hope you are as well as usual, madame."

"Why, no, on the contrary, I have been ill, suffering. You must find me changed, do you not?"

"I believe that we shall have a very fine day," said Gustave, turning towards Adolphine, who whispered very low to him,—

"She knows nothing."

"Very well, we will surprise her."

"What does this mean? He's not listening to me," said Fanny to herself.

Then rising quickly she approached the young man, saying,—

"Monsieur, I shall have a good deal to say to you. I have some important explanations to communicate to you. I hope that you will kindly give me your arm and accompany me home, where we can talk without disturbing anybody."

Adolphine held faster to Gustave's arm, and the latter answered very calmly,—

"Madame, I am very sorry to have to refuse you, but I have made up my mind not to go to your house again, and I have not the slightest need of any explanations."

The little widow bit her lips with anger, while Adolphine breathed more freely.

"What, monsieur, are you afraid to come to my house?" resumed Fanny, forcing a smile.

"I know now, madame, I have nothing further to fear with you, but I have not the slightest reason for going to see you. Permit me to say that your invitation has altogether surprised me."

Fanny walked up and down the room, exhibiting every appearance of extreme impatience.

Finally she returned towards Gustave, and said in a resolute tone,—

"Monsieur, I repeat to you that I need to speak to you alone; that there are some things which I can reveal only to yourself. Since you absolutely refuse to come with me, I will speak to you here. My sister will be willing, I hope, to leave us for a moment. Oh, I shall not take advantage of monsieur's time."

Adolphine was very much vexed, and did not seem at all disposed to leave her sister alone with Gustave; but the latter took her hand and pressed it to his lips, saying,—

"Since madame absolutely insists upon it, go, my dear Adolphine. But do not go far, for our conversation will not be long."

"How gallant he is to my sister," said Fanny to herself, while Gustave led Adolphine to the door. "Well, we shall see."

"We are alone, madame, I can hear what you have to say," said Gustave.

Fanny immediately threw herself at the young man's feet, exclaiming in a voice which she endeavored to render heartbreaking,—

"Gustave, forgive me. Have pity upon me, forgive me, or you will see me die at your feet."

"Pray rise, madame, I do not understand what you mean by this scene."

"Ah, you will not understand me, but I am not afraid to accuse myself; yes, I was culpable—

very culpable. Ambition, the desire to wear a title, turned my head; I no longer knew what I was doing; I was mad. You can well imagine that it was not love that drew me towards the comte, poor man. No, I have loved but one person, and that person is you. Yes, you, despite the foolish manner in which I have conducted myself. And then, I don't know why, but the last time that we were together, you sought a quarrel with me, and I thought you rather jealous; I have too much susceptibility; I get angry too quickly. In fact, I repeat to you that I did not know what I was doing. Gustave, my dear friend, ah, I shall not get up until you have quite forgiven me."

"Have you said all you wish to say, madame?" answered Gustave, with a calmness which disconcerted the little widow and brought her to her feet.

"Yes, of course; I believe, at least, that I have fully expressed my regret and remorse to you."

"Well, madame, be satisfied, I forgive you; and the more willingly because your not marrying me was the greatest service you could have possibly rendered me."

"What does this mean, monsieur? It seems to me that what you are saying is very ungallant."

"Oh, madame, you have given me the right to be ungallant to you. I am not reproaching

you, God forbid; but to be frank, you might have dispensed with playing this last comedy with me. I am aware that you have a sufficiently poor opinion of my spirit—I had given you the right to so judge of me; but the fact is, there are bounds to everything—and I cannot imagine that you judge me to be absolutely an idiot. It seems to me that I don't flatter myself too much in so thinking."

"Monsieur, what do you mean by a comedy? What signifies this tone, this raillery?"

"Oh, we won't get angry, madame, and to close all these debates, allow me to present you to my wife."

So saying, Gustave hastened to open the door. Adolphine was there; she was beaming, for she had heard all. She gave her hand to Gustave, and they both bowed to the little widow, who became in turn, white, red, and green, and exclaimed after a pause,—

"Oh, so it is my sister you are going to marry. I ought to have suspected it; as you like, monsieur. In fact, you will suit each other very well; I congratulate you."

"Will you not come to my wedding, Fanny?" said Adolphine, holding out her hand to her sister.

But the latter rudely pushed away the hand that was offered to her, exclaiming,—

"Get away from me." Then she departed, saying, "I would much rather that she should

marry this gentleman, for I think he is frightful with his scar."

On leaving M. Gerbault's, Gustave found Cherami at his place awaiting him.

"Well, how are things going?" demanded "handsome" Arthur. "Only by looking at you, my dear fellow, I can see that you seem to be satisfied."

The young man darted towards Cherami, exclaiming,—

"You guessed rightly; Adolphine did love me, she does love me. In three days she will be my wife, and it is to you that I owe my happiness, for but for you I should never have discovered her secret."

"What a delightful fellow you are! You're trying now to make me think that you owe me gratitude. Dear Gustave, you are going to be as happy as you deserve. By all the powers, I am pleased; I can truly say that I have caught my hare. But what about your uncle?"

"My uncle no longer rails against my love; on the contrary, he now approves my choice."

"He was not disgusted?"

"He has made me his partner?"

"Bravo!"

"Now you may well imagine that I shall busy myself for you. You must have a lucrative and agreeable situation."

"Your marriage is the first thing, you can think of me later on."

"Not a bit of it; I have an idea that I want to communicate to my uncle."

"Your uncle believes me good for nothing."

"He will get over his prejudice. I wish to speak to him to-day of you. Come back to-morrow about noon; I shall give you, I am certain, a favorable answer."

"So be it; to-morrow at noon. At your office or here?"

"At my office. Oh, I have changed it; now you must pass by my uncle's office and follow a long passage which leads to the cashier's office, then turn to the left and the door of my office is opposite you."

"Very well, a long passage, then to the left; oh, I shall find it. Good-by till to-morrow, my dear Gustave. By the way, shall I be at the wedding?"

"Will you be at the wedding? Why, you've made my marriage with Adolphine. It was you who made me notice that angel whom my foolish passion hid from me. But for your presence at my wedding, something would be lacking to my happiness."

"Now that's really very nice of you. Be assured I will do you credit, and make myself agreeable to everybody."

As soon as Cherami left him, Gustave went in search of M. Grandcourt, and to him said,—

"Now that I am about to be married, my dear

uncle, you may well imagine that I have no further desire to travel; however, we shall still have need of a representative abroad for our business. Isn't this possible?"

"I see what's coming," said the banker, shaking his head. "You are going to speak to me of your M. Cherami."

"Well, yes, I am. Am I wrong after all? Has he not given me proofs of his friendship, his devotion? He it was who guessed that Adolphine loved me."

"Why did he not say so sooner, then?"

"Do you suppose I would have listened to him before? Come, uncle, you have been so good to me; you have overwhelmed me with benefits; you have made me a partner in your business; will you do nothing for a man who is my friend? He has had a heedless, dissipated youth, but now he is quite changed."

"How can you prove that?"

"Why, his greatest desire is to find employment, and I assure you that he has ability to perform his duties."

"I don't doubt that at all. This gentleman has talent and ability, and good manners when he likes; but—"

"But?—"

"Well, he doesn't inspire me with confidence, and for our representative, a man of honor is necessary before everything."

"You misjudge Cherami; he has borrowed, contracted debts, and not paid them; but his lack of means was to blame for this. In fact, he has been very unlucky. Would you impute as a crime to him the fact that he has borne his poverty cheerfully, and had confidence in the future? Poor fellow, and I told him to hope for a favorable answer—told him to come to-morrow to look for it here."

Monsieur Grandcourt made no answer. He appeared to be meditating. Gustave was saddened by the non-success of his request. Suddenly his uncle said,—

"You told M. Cherami to come to-morrow to speak to you?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Where was he to look for you; at your apartment or at your office?"

"At my office."

"Did you give him full directions to follow the passage and then turn to the left?"

"Yes, uncle."

"At what hour was he to be here?"

"At noon; and he'll be prompt, for he never fails to keep an appointment."

"Well, to-morrow, at two o'clock I will give you my definite answer in regard to your protégé."

"And it will be good, will it not, uncle?"

"I can't tell you yet; but as for you, to-morrow at noon oblige me by not being at your office."

"Me, uncle? why, what are you thinking of? Cherami will be there."

"Don't be uneasy about that, that is my business; go and pass to-morrow morning with your intended."

"Oh, nothing will please me better."

"And come to me at two o'clock; you will then learn my decision concerning M. Cherami."

The next day twelve o'clock was striking as Cherami entered the banking house. Arthur did not lull himself with false hopes; he did not count on a favorable response, but, with his habitual philosophy, he said to himself,—

"Should I fail, that will not prevent me, at any rate, from going to Gustave's wedding and enjoying myself there."

As he was perfectly acquainted with the way to the offices, Cherami entered on the ground floor; there was a kind of vestibule, to the right a door led to the offices and the clerks. Opposite was the door of a long passage into which several other doors opened; this was the passage he must follow to reach Gustave's office. Cherami entered it and walked straight along. He had hardly passed the door of M. Grandcourt's private room, when his foot struck against something rather thick; he stooped and picked up a pocketbook. His first impulse was to examine what he had found; the pocketbook was very simple, of green morocco, and bearing not the slightest mark. But in the left

side pocket was a rather thick fold of bank notes. Cherami counted them, there were twenty-five thousand francs; he looked in all the other compartments of the pocketbook, but there were no letters or papers; nothing that could inform him as to whom it belonged.

"By all the powers! why, this is a find," said Cherami to himself. "Twenty-five thousand francs—a neat little sum; who can have lost it? I see nobody about, but this must not make me forget that Gustave is waiting for me."

Putting in his coat pocket the pocketbook he had found, our man followed the passage, and turning to the left passed through a short corridor, saw a door before him and turned the knob to enter, but the door would not open.

"What! it's closed; yes, tightly closed," said Cherami to himself. "Gustave must have forgotten the appointment. On the point of his marriage that is quite excusable. Come, let's get out of this. But this pocketbook? I must go and inquire at the cashier's office."

The cashier's office was at the end of the long passage. Cherami had already passed it by and had not noticed that it was shut, for it was on Sunday, a holiday.

This time in returning towards the door of the cashier's office, which also refused to open, Cherami exclaimed,—

"Why, how is this, everything is shut to-day!

It's very singular; one would say that circumstances conspired to allow me to carry off this pocketbook with impunity."

He set off again and reached the banker's door. There he said to himself,—

"Let us see if this is also shut."

But this time the door yielded and Cherami found M. Grandcourt seated at his usual table; but that gentleman was unable to repress a slight movement when he saw our friend enter. But immediately restraining himself, he bowed to Cherami with his usual coldness and without disturbing himself.

"I've come again to bother you, monsieur," said Cherami, "but Gustave made an appointment with me at noon, and I found no one in."

"I don't know where he is, monsieur."

"He was to give me an answer in regard to— to something. I imagine that he had nothing good to tell me and that is why he is not here."

"Then, monsieur, what do you want of me?"

"Oh, by Jove, nothing; only to give you this pocketbook which I found in your corridor. And as the one who lost it will no doubt come to reclaim it, you will kindly return it to him. If I had found anybody in your cashier's office, I would not have disturbed you."

So saying, Cherami drew from his pocket the pocketbook and put it before the banker. The face of the latter had completely changed. The

liveliest satisfaction was depicted on his features; however, he tried to dissemble his pleasure, and said,—

"Ah, you found that near here?"

"In the corridor. I knocked at several doors, but they were all locked."

"And you know what this pocketbook contains?"

"Yes, twenty-five thousand francs in bank notes. Count them and you will find it correct. And no letters, no address, nothing to indicate to whom it belongs."

"Monsieur, do you know that you have done very well indeed in this matter?" said M. Grandcourt, turning towards Cherami and looking at him for the first time with a kindly expression.

"What do you mean by very well? Because I restore a pocketbook that I have found? Come now, did you take me for a thief? for a man who would keep that which did not belong to him? Why, confound it! I don't understand how any one should have that opinion of me, and it will be necessary—"

"Come, come, calm yourself, hothead! No one has a bad opinion of you. Are you trying to seek a quarrel with me again?"

"You seemed surprised that I should do a thing that is quite simple to any one who has the least probity."

"Let us forget all that. Now, will you accept

the position of traveller for us? It's merely a question of going to see our correspondents abroad, and of keeping us informed as to their orders. This employment, you see, is an agreeable one. We offer you for that six thousand francs salary and all your travelling expenses to be paid by us. How does that suit you?"

"How does that suit me? Why, it delights me. Dear uncle of my friend, allow me—but no, kissing is all foolishness between men; give me your hand, that is much better."

"Here it is, M. Cherami, and now you may place me among the number of your true friends."

"The number is never very large; you and Gustave comprise the whole."

"Allow me also to give you two thousand francs in advance on your salary. You may have purchases to make and some little debts to pay."

"By Jove, I shall be very glad of it. I will pay Capucine and Blanquette, two old creditors who have not been very pressing. Oh, I'm sure they were not uneasy, but they have waited long enough; this evening I will send them what I owe them. They will be surprised, but they will accept."

Some days later, Gustave married Adolphine, who at last obtained the recompense of that sincere and devoted love which she had so long hidden in the depths of her heart.

Fanny ceased to see her sister after she became Gustave's wife. The little widow could not forgive herself for having refused a man who had now more than forty thousand francs income, and was further aggravated by the fact that no one came to replace him.

Monsieur Batonnin had been very much vexed at the refusal of his hand, and on learning that it was Gustave who was preferred to him, the desire came to him to make mischief, because he believed, as well as many others, that Gustave had no courage, since he had allowed Cherami to fight for him. But when he found himself in the presence of the one who was loved by Adolphine, when he had seen the famous sabre wound, M. Batonnin became honeyed and smiling, and he complimented Gustave on his new choice.

Some months after Gustave's marriage, finding himself one day in front of the omnibus office of the Porte Saint-Martin, Cherami, who had become a very elegant dandy indeed, again met Madame Capucine and her two boys. He hastened to greet the fat lady, saying to her,—

"You happen to be going to see your aunt again? But this is not the way."

"Pardon me, she is no longer at Saint-Mandé, she has returned to Romainville. Her health is better there."

"Does she still eat as many rabbits?"

"No, she had too much of them; she is disgusted with them."

"Then I shall go and see good Madame Duponceau again."

"Oh, yes, as you did the other times, when you stole away and no one saw anything more of you. Come down at once with us."

"Impossible for me to do so to-day; I see down there two persons who are expecting me."

Cherami perceived at the corner of the boulevard Mesdemoiselles Laurette and Lucie, who for their part had stopped to look at him, saying to themselves,—

"It really is he; how well he is dressed now."

"Yes, certainly it's him; you can see very well that he still has a crooked nose; but now that he is so elegantly got up, it is not so unbecoming to him. He looks very distinguished now."

Cherami approached the two friends, bowed graciously, and said to them,—

"Decidedly this place is fortunate for me; for I remember, mesdemoiselles, that it was exactly in front of this omnibus office that I first had the pleasure of seeing you."

"That is true, monsieur, but since that time we have remained simple workwomen, while you, monsieur, seem to have made your fortune."

"No, mesdemoiselles, I have not made a fortune; only I am more settled, changed altogether, and I have found a situation that I am

trying to fill worthily. Now, twice when I met you, I offered you a dinner, and I should have been very much embarrassed had you accepted, for I had not a sou. To-day my pocketbook is well supplied, and I do not make you the same proposition, because I am the representative of the house of Grandcourt & Nephew, and because as such I have promised to change my conduct. But that will not prevent me from offering you each a bouquet, because the most virtuous man is still allowed to be gallant."

So saying, Cherami purchased at a flower stand established at the corner of the boulevard two handsome bouquets, which he gave to Mesdemoiselles Laurette and Lucie. Then he bowed to them again, and departed, saying,—

"I have conducted myself like Cato and I congratulate myself upon it now, because in my new apartment on the Rue Richelieu I have on my landing a charming neighbor, with an elegant carriage and very distinguished looking; a widow in very easy circumstances, who has responded to my bows with the most gracious smile. And, by Jove, I have caught my hare!